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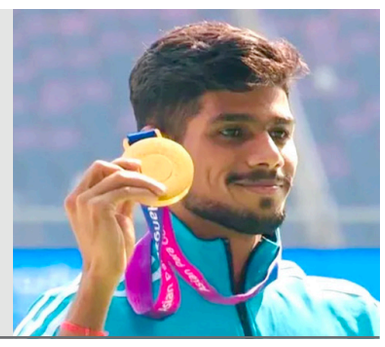

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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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India at UN: Pakistan army 'pleaded' for ceasefire

UNITED NATIONS, 27 SEPT

India has issued a sharp rebuttal to Pakistan at the United Nations General Assembly, accusing its leadership of glorifying terrorism and distorting facts about the recent conflict.

Delivering India's Right of Reply, Petal Gahlot, First Secretary at the Permanent Mission, described Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's address as "absurd theatrics" that once again highlighted terrorism as central to Pakistan's foreign policy.

She recalled that India launched Operation Sindoor in May after the 22 April Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 civilians. The operation targeted terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Until 9 May, Pakistan had threatened further strikes, but its military "pleaded directly" for a cessation of fighting the very next day, after Indian forces destroyed multiple airbases she said.

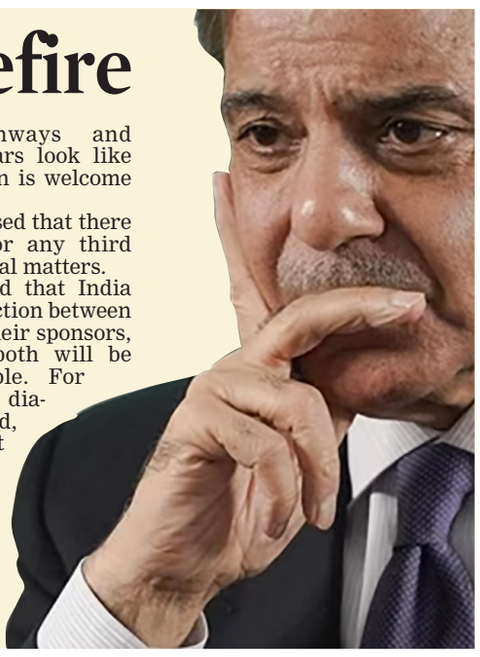
Rejecting Sharif's claim that Pakistan "won the war" and secured a US-facilitated ceasefire, Gahlot retorted: "If destroyed runways and burnt-out hangars look like victory, Pakistan is welcome to enjoy it."

India emphasised that there is "no room for any third party" in bilateral matters.

Gahlot stressed that India makes no distinction between terrorists and their sponsors, pledging that both will be held accountable. For any meaningful dialogue, she said, Pakistan must dismantle terrorist camps, hand over wanted militants, and abandon nuclear blackmail. —*PTI*

'TERRORISTS ARE WAITING AT LOC'; BSF ON HIGH ALERT

The Border Security Force (BSF) has warned that terrorists are waiting at launch pads across the Line of Control (LoC), seeking to infiltrate the Kashmir valley ahead of winter. BSF Kashmir Frontier Inspector General Ashok Yadav confirmed the presence of terrorists opposite the Bandipora and Kupwara sectors. He noted that infiltration attempts usually increase before snowfall, as militants know their chances will be limited for the next six months. Yadav stressed that security is "very tight" and forces are ready to counter any attempts, even when terrorists wait for adverse weather to make a move. He added that the Army and BSF are dominating the LoC using hi-tech surveillance equipment. So far this year, two infiltration bids have been foiled, making it "very difficult to infiltrate" their area of responsibility. The BSF remains on high alert, ensuring that border security is maintained and infiltration attempts are effectively thwarted. —*PTI*



Will suspend officials if potholes not fixed: CM

BENGALURU, 27 SEPT

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah went on "City rounds" on Saturday, inspecting the condition of the roads. He said officials had 30 days to fill all the potholes make all the City roads motorable. The Commissioners and Chief Engineers of the five City corporations will be held responsible in case of any lapses. Siddaramaiah noticed that the BMRCL, while carrying out Metro construction work near Hebbal had caused water to stagnate on the roadside by blocking a drainage system and damaged the white topping of the road. "If potholes form on roads developed under white topping, the Contractors themselves must bear the responsibility," he said. "Once a road is handed over to the City under white topping, BBMP cannot provide funds for its maintenance.." -Salar News with —*Agencies*
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Court gives bail to driver who killed FinMin worker

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

A Delhi court on Saturday granted bail to Gaganpreet Kaur, 38, the main accused in a fatal BMW accident case. Kaur is alleged to have driven the car that struck a scooter on 14 September, killing 52-year-old Navjot Singh, a senior Finance Ministry official, and seriously injuring his wife. Judicial Magistrate Ankit Garg ordered her release on a personal bond of Rs 1 lakh with two sureties of the same amount and directed her to surrender her passport. The court noted that an ambulance remained at the scene for only 30 seconds instead of taking the injured couple to hospital. Singh succumbed to his injuries near Delhi Cantonment metro station. —*PTI*
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India's Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve gets UNESCO tag

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

India's Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve, perched high in the trans-Himalayan region, is among the 26 new biosphere reserves across several countries, designated by UNESCO, the world body announced on Saturday. India now has 13 biospheres listed in UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves. The Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve of northern India spans approximately 7,770 sq km across the dramatic landscapes of Himachal Pradesh's Lahaul-Spiti district. —*PTI*

Kalyana K'taka floods: Boy dies in house collapse

BENGALURU, 27 SEPT

Incessant rains and overflowing rivers, particularly the Bhima, have disrupted normal life and caused significant damage to crops and infrastructure in several districts of the Kalyana Karnataka region, officials said on Saturday. Heavy rainfall affected normal life in Kalaburagi, Yadgir, Bidar, Vijayapura, Raichur and Koppal districts. An 11-year-old boy, Darshan Nagpa Lathura, died after the wall of his house collapsed due to heavy rain in Mahalingapura town of Bagalkote district late Friday night. —*PTI*
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36, including 8 kids, killed in stampede at Vijay's rally

Stampede triggered by overcrowding, delay in Vijay's arrival

KARUR, 27 SEPT

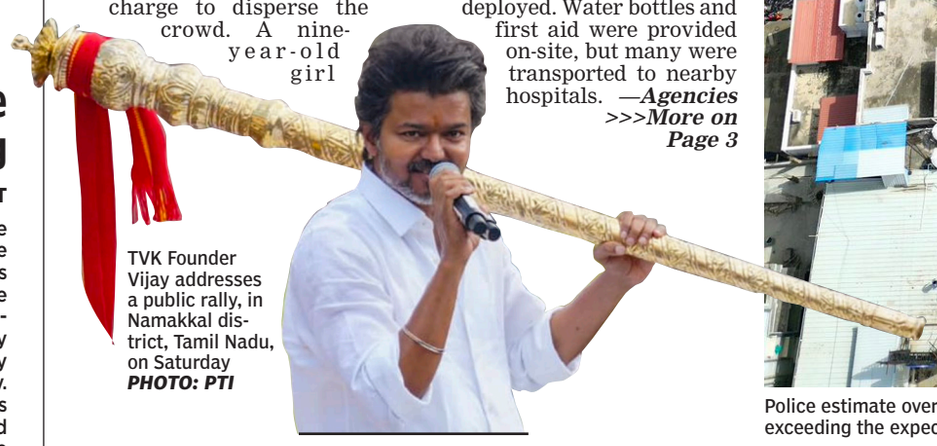
A political rally led by Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) chief and actor Vijay turned tragic in Tamil Nadu's Karur district on Saturday, as a massive stampede killed at least 36 people and injured over 50, according to Health Minister Ma Subramanian. The 36 dead include eight children and 16 women.

The stampede occurred as tens of thousands of supporters gathered at Veluchamy Puram, where Vijay was to address the crowd. Police estimate over 50,000 people had assembled at the venue — far exceeding the expected 10,000 mentioned in the permission letter. Vijay's arrival was delayed by over six hours, leading to overcrowding.

Eyewitnesses reported that many women, children, and elderly supporters were caught in the surge. Several people fainted, triggering panic and chaos. Vijay's speech was interrupted twice to allow ambulances through. Police later resorted to a lathi charge to disperse the crowd. A nine-year-old girl also went missing during the confusion, prompting Vijay to make a public appeal for assistance.

Chief Minister MK Stalin expressed shock, directing urgent medical aid and deploying top officials including Ministers Ma Subramanian, Anbil Mahesh, and former minister Senthil Balaji to Karur. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also extended condolences to the bereaved families and wished a speedy recovery for the injured. Despite repeated appeals from Vijay and strict conditions imposed by police and courts — including restrictions on convoys, public receptions, and advisories for vulnerable groups to follow online — most were ignored. Supporters brought in children and the differently abled, leading to dangerous overcrowding.

Earlier, TVK had released a 10-point safety guideline after similar chaos at its rally in Trichy on 13 September. Over 50 people remain hospitalised, with emergency medical teams from Tiruchi and Salem deployed. Water bottles and first aid were provided on-site, but many were transported to nearby hospitals. —*Agencies*
>>>More on Page 3



TVK Founder Vijay addresses a public rally, in Namakkal district, Tamil Nadu, on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

Police estimate over 50,000 people had assembled at the venue — far exceeding the expected 10,000 mentioned in permission letter **PHOTO: X**

'ULTERIOR MOTIVES, INT'L LINKS'

People at a market area after curfew restrictions were relaxed for two hours, in Leh, Ladakh on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

Wangchuk being probed for Pak links: Ladakh cops

LEH, 27 SEPT

Ladakh Director General of Police S D Singh Jamwal on Saturday confirmed that climate activist Sonam Wangchuk is under investigation for alleged links to Pakistan, following the arrest of a Pakistani Intelligence Operative who had reportedly shared videos of Wangchuk-led protests across the border.

Jamwal called Wangchuk the "main instigator" of Wednesday's violent protests in Leh, which left four dead and scores injured. He was detained under the National Security Act on Friday and sent to Jodhpur jail.

"There is a probe into foreign funding and FCRA violations. A PIO was found sending protest videos abroad. Wangchuk's past speeches referencing the Arab Spring and unrest in neighbouring countries reveal a concerning agenda," Jamwal said.

The DGP also cited Wangchuk's foreign visits, including to Pakistan and Bangladesh, as suspicious.

He accused Wangchuk of hijacking the movement for statehood and the Sixth Schedule, led by the Leh Apex Body and Kargil Democratic Alliance, and of derailing Centre-Ladakh dialogue.

Jamwal defended the police firing, saying it was in self-defence as protesters attacked public offices, torched a BJP office, and injured 70-80 police and CRPF personnel. "Had forces not acted, all of Leh could've been burned down," he warned. —*PTI*
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PM unveils BSNL's 'swadeshi' 4G network

UP CM Yogi Adityanath and others watch a live telecast of PM Narendra Modi inaugurating BSNL's 'Swadeshi' 4G stack in Lucknow **PHOTO: PTI**

JHARSUGUDA/KOLKATA, 27 SEPT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday inaugurated BSNL's 'Swadeshi' 4G network, marking India's entry into the league of nations manufacturing indigenous telecom equipment, including Denmark, Sweden, South Korea and China. The launch coincided with Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited's silver jubilee and commissioned over 97,500 mobile 4G towers, including 92,600 4G technology sites built at a cost of around Rs 37,000 crore.

The cloud-based network is upgradeable to 5G. Over 26,700 unconnected villages, including 2,472 in Odisha, will now receive connectivity, benefiting more than 20 lakh new subscribers. The towers are solar-powered, forming India's largest cluster of green telecom sites. The stack, fully homegrown, enables India to become the fifth country globally to deploy a self-reliant 4G-ready stack capable of scaling to 5G. —*PTI*

EAM asks BRICS to defend trading system

NEW YORK, 27 SEPT

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar urged BRICS nations to defend the multilateral trading system amid rising protectionism and tariff volatility at the bloc's Foreign Ministers' meeting on the sidelines of the 80th UN General Assembly.

In a joint communiqué, BRICS nations expressed "serious concerns" over unilateral trade-restrictive actions, warning they harm developing economies and violate WTO norms.

The Ministers called for fair and inclusive global trade. India, as BRICS Chair in 2026, will focus on food and energy security, climate action, and digital innovation. The bloc also strongly condemned the 22 April terror attack in Pahalgam. —*PTI*
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NO HANDSHAKE?

India to snub Naqvi at Asia Cup final?

DUBAI, 27 SEPT

Mohsin Naqvi, Pakistan's Interior Minister and Chairman of both the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) and Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), will attend the Asia Cup final between India and Pakistan on Sunday, potentially creating a diplomatic flashpoint.

As ACC chief, Naqvi is officially mandated to participate in the post-match trophy presentation and is entitled to shake hands with both teams.

However, with the Indian team maintaining a strict 'No Handshake' policy with Pakistan, it remains to be seen how the BCCI responds.

BCCI has not yet commented officially on whether India will participate in customary post-match pleasantries.

Tensions escalated after Naqvi reportedly pushed PCB to accuse match referee Andy Pycroft of preventing handshakes after the 14 Sept match — a claim the ICC dismissed. Naqvi also led efforts to have India captain Suryakumar Yadav banned from the final, after he dedicated the team's win to India's Armed Forces. Naqvi recently posted a video on X mimicking Cristiano Ronaldo's goal celebration with a plane crash theme. —*PTI*
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UP: Cleric, 7 others held for 'I Love Muhammad' stir

BAREILLY, 27 SEPT

Police have arrested eight people, including Maulana Tauqeer Raza Khan, chief of the Ittehad-e-Millat Council, in connection with violent clashes that broke out in Bareilly after Friday prayers. The unrest followed Raza's call for a protest in support of the 'I Love Muhammad' campaign.

A local court on Saturday remanded Raza and seven others in 14-day judicial custody. The other accused have been identified as Sarfaraz, Manifuddin, Azeem Ahmed, Mohammed Sharif, Mohammed Aamir, Rehan, and Mohammad Sarfaraz.

District Magistrate Avinash Singh and SSP Anurag Arya said at a press conference that Raza was the "main conspirator" of the violence. A case has been registered against Raza, 25 named individuals and 200 unidentified persons. —*PTI*

11 Kerala students held with drugs in Mangaluru

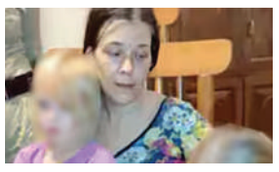
MANGALURU, 27 SEPT

Eleven second-year BBA students from Kerala were arrested in Mangaluru on charges of possessing and attempting to sell cannabis in commercial quantities, police said on Saturday. Acting on a tip-off, a team from Mangaluru South Police, led by PSI Sheetal Alagur, raided an apartment near Kaprigudde Mosque in Attavar on Thursday evening. All the accused were staying in the city for their studies. During the raid, the police recovered 12.26 kg of cannabis, reportedly sourced from Odisha and packed in seven parcels. The quantity and manner of packaging indicated an attempt to sell in commercial quantities, the police added. The seized contraband is valued at about Rs 2.45 lakh. *—PTI*

8 injured in gas cylinder blast in Vijayanagara

VIJAYANAGARA, 27 SEPT

Eight people, including two children, were severely injured in a cylinder explosion at a house in Gadiganur, Ballari taluk, on Saturday. The injured have been identified as Halappa, 42; Kavita, 32; Gangamma, 63; Mailarappa, 48; Mallamma, 40; Kaveri, 18; Kavya, 15 and Nikhil, 13. The incident occurred around 5.15am on Saturday when Kavitha tried to light the stove, leading to the blast. The cause of the explosion was suspected to be a gas leak, which destroyed half the house, leaving Kavitha in critical condition and others severely injured. The house belongs to a lawyer, located next to the Hospet-Bellary National Highway. There were about 10 people in the house. *—Salar News*



Russian woman, kids found in cave to go home

BENGALURU, 27 SEPT

The Karnataka High Court on Friday permitted the Union Government to issue travel documents to facilitate the return of a Russian woman and her two minor daughters who had been discovered living in a cave in coastal Karnataka.

Justice BM Shyam Prasad passed the order while hearing a petition filed by Israeli national Dror Shlomo Goldstein, who claims to be the father of the children. Goldstein had approached the court seeking a direction to the Centre not to immediately deport the minor children.

The woman, Nina Kutina, was found on 11 July in a cave in the Ramatirtha Hills near Gokarna in Kumta taluk. Authorities reported that she and the children had been living there for nearly two months without valid travel or residence documents.

Goldstein had earlier lodged a complaint at the Panaji police station in Goa in December last year after being unable to trace his children in India.

The court recorded that the Russian consulate had issued emergency travel papers for Kutina and her daughters, valid only until 9 October. It also took note of Kutina's own communication to the consulate, in which she expressed her wish to return to Russia at the earliest.

Goldstein's counsel had opposed deportation, arguing that it would go against the best interests of the children while custody proceedings were still pending. The court, however, observed that Goldstein had not provided any satisfactory explanation for why the mother and children had been living in isolation in a cave.

Emphasising the principle of children's welfare, the bench stated that the mother's request to travel back to Russia and the Russian government's readiness to facilitate their return outweighed other considerations. *—PTI*

Several villages flooded in Kalaburagi, Yadgir, Bidar, Vijayapura, Raichur and Koppal districts as reservoirs discharged large quantiles of water **PHOTO: SALAR**

Boy dead as floods wreck Kalyana Karnataka region

Houses, villages and bridges get swallowed in the heavy rain

BIDAR, 27 SEPT

Incessant rains and overflowing rivers have disrupted normal life and flooded several villages in Kalyana Karnataka, officials said on Saturday. A also boy died in a house collapse in Bagalkote district.

Heavy rainfall affected normal life in Kalaburagi, Yadgir, Bidar, Vijayapura, Raichur and Koppal districts. The IMD issued an orange warning for several parts of the region.

The Kagina, Bhima, Bennethora, and Mullamari rivers have crossed danger levels, submerging several villages and cutting off road connectivity as bridges went under water.

Officials also reported loss of livestock and farmland due to the flooding. Rescue and relief operations are underway, with people living in low-lying areas and along riverbanks.

BAGALKOTE

An 11-year-old boy, Darshan Nagpa Lathura, died after the wall of his house collapsed due to heavy rain in Mahalingapura town of Bagalkote district late Friday night, the third such incident this monsoon. His brother, who was injured in the incident, is undergoing treatment.

KALABURAGI

The IMD reported that Kalaburagi district received over 250mm rainfall in September, the highest in five decades, as several bridges were inundated.

Several houses were submerged in Kadaboor village in Chittapur taluk, and villagers used fishing rafts to shift belongings to safer places.

The rains in Chincholi taluk brought over 7,500 cusecs inflow into the Chandrampalli reservoir, prompting authorities to open three gates. This submerged the Chandrampalli bridge. From Nagaral reservoir, 4,500 cusecs of water was released, flooding Tajlapur and Garampalli bridges.

Houses in Chandapur, Garampalli, Anawar, and other villages were also inundated.

Kalaburagi District in-charge Minister Priyank Kharge, during a visit to affected areas, said the State government has deployed the SDRF and all available resources to shift families to safer high grounds.

"We have opened 36 relief centres where over 1,500 people are receiving freshly cooked meals and shelter," he added.

RAICHUR

With inflows rising in the Maski reservoir, four gates were opened, raising flood fears. In Maski's Basaveshwara Nagar and Valmiki Nagar, several houses and shops flooded.

FLOOD THREATS

Massive inflows from Maharashtra into the Bhima river have severely affected Vijayapura, and Yadgir districts. From Maharashtra's Ujani and Sina dams, 3.45 lakh cusecs of water were released, putting 94 villages at flood risk. Hunasagi and Gurumitkal taluks of Yadgir are among the worst affected.

Thousands of hectares of crops have been destroyed.

In Vijayapura, the Doni river overflowed, submerging the Talikote bridge. Heavy rains were reported from Koppal, Dharwad, Chikkamagaluru, and Belagavi districts. *—Salar News*

Will suspend officials if potholes not fixed: CM

BENGALURU, 27 SEPT

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah went on "City rounds" on Saturday, inspecting the condition of the roads. He said officials had 30 days to fill all the potholes make all the City roads motorable. The Commissioners and Chief Engineers of the five City corporations will be held responsible in case of any lapses.

"I have given instructions to fill potholes and to maintain quality in the work. I have suspended an assistant executive engineer as he had left a pothole just by filling gravel without putting tar or wet mix. Contractors have to maintain the roads. White topping is being done for Hennur road, for which Rs 13 crore per km is being spent; it is a 5km road project," Siddaramiah said.

"Potholes have occurred due to increased rain. It should have been filled up, but it was not done," he said. "The white topping work is expected to last two-three years."

"I don't want to blame the BJP, but they did not fill the potholes while in power. If they had done it, such a situation wouldn't have arisen. They didn't even release any funds for the maintenance of roads," he added. "We are in power now, we will ensure that the potholes are filled."

Asked about the garbage issue, he said, "If I notice it again, action will be taken against Commissioners."

—Salar News with Agencies

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah inspected the condition of various roads during his 'City rounds' on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

NAVARATRI JOY

People take part in Garba Dandiya dance, on the occasion of Vijayadashami festival, at Palace Grounds in Bengaluru on Saturday **PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD**

Rowdy-sheeter shot dead in broad daylight

UDUPI, 27 SEPT

A rowdy-sheeter was shot dead allegedly by unidentified assailants in the Malpe area of this district on Saturday, police said.

The deceased, identified as Saifuddin, 38, a resident of Manipal, was reportedly involved in the transport business and had a record of criminal cases, police said.

Sources indicated he was also allegedly linked to local disputes, though the exact motive for the killing remains under investigation.

According to police, Saifuddin was attacked near his workplace when a group of unidentified assailants opened fire on him around 10.30am. Eyewitnesses said the attackers fired several shots and then physically assaulted him before fleeing the scene on a motorcycle.

Udupi Superintendent of Police Hariram Shankar visited the spot and said multiple teams have been formed to track down the perpetrators. "We have registered a case and are examining CCTV footage and eyewitness accounts.

The motive behind the killing is being probed," he told reporters.

Police said no arrests have been made so far. The incident has heightened tension in the area, prompting the police to increase patrolling and deploy additional security personnel in Malpe and the surrounding localities. *—PTI*

New superfast train to run between Bengaluru-Mumbai

BENGALURU, 27 SEPT

BJP leader Tejasvi Surya on Saturday said that the Union Ministry of Railways has approved a new superfast train between Bengaluru and Mumbai, fulfilling a 30-year-old demand of people from both cities.

Surya pointed out that despite Bengaluru and Mumbai being two of India's most important economic hubs, the two cities had been connected by only one train, the Udyan Express, which takes over 24 hours to complete the journey.

The new train will significantly decongest travel and provide a comfortable alternative to flights and buses and further strengthen economic and social ties between the two metros, it said, adding that the service is expected to benefit lakhs of daily commuters, business travellers, and families.

"Last year alone, over 26 lakh people travelled by air between the two cities. This new service will make travel more affordable and convenient for lakhs of citizens," the Bengaluru South MP said in a statement.

Surya had been lobbying for the train, raising the issue in Parliament, Public Accounts Committee meetings and with senior Railway officials over the four years. *—Salar News*

Only want the truth: DKS on D'sthala

BENGALURU, 27 SEPT

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Saturday said that the only objective of the government is to bring out the truth in regards to the Dharmasthala mass burials case.

He was responding to Dharmasthala temple Dharmadhikari Veerendra Heggade's statement on Friday, where he had expressed his gratitude to the government for the SIT in the case.

"Let the report (SIT probe report) come…. Either Home Minister or Chief Minister will make an official statement (then)," he said. *—Salar News*

Why is Oppn questioning GBIT now: DyCM

RAMANAGARA, 27 SEPT

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar lashed out at the Opposition JD(S) and BJP for double standards over the formation of the Greater Bengaluru Integrated Township (GBIT) at Bidadi. He added that the government was aware who real farmers were "real farmers" and "brokers" in Bidadi over the land acquisition project, saying that those who rejected the revised compensation would be given the previous amount.

Asked about former prime minister HD Deve Gowda's statement that he would fight against GBIT, Shivakumar said, "He is welcome. It was his own son (HD) Kumaraswammy who issued a notification for the project. It was them who got into an agreement with DLF to form Bidadi township. Why did they not de-notify the land if they are opposed to the township?"

"But they are now questioning me?" he said while speaking to press in Ramanagara.

Shivakumar added that Toyota has sought 300 acres of land in the GBIT to "build a residential complex on the lines of Japan." *—Salar News*

1ST OFFICIAL COMPLAINT

Corruption doubled under Cong: Contractors body

BENGALURU, 27 SEPT

The Karnataka State Contractors' Association (KSCA) has written to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah alleging that commission for clearing payments in several departments under the current Congress government has "doubled" compared with the previous BJP regime. Although the body has orally accused the Congress in the past, this is the first time that they have said it in writing.

In a letter dated 25 September, the association has said that despite repeated assurances and instructions to officials, contractors across districts have not received any relief so far.

It accused the State government of failing to release long-pending dues of contractors for nearly two years. It pointed out that eight departments that execute public works have withheld payments and are releasing only 15-20 per cent of dues once every three months under "special lines of credit" arrangements.

The KSCA wrote a letter to CM Siddaramaiah, saying that two-year old dues of contractors were yet to be released **PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD**

"While in Opposition, you had assured us that once in power, pending contractor payments would be released without any commission. But compared to the previous government, commissions have now doubled in all departments," the letter signed by President R Manjunath and General Secretary GM Ravindra of the association said.

The 40 per cent commission allegation by KSCA had rocked State politics and became a major poll plank for the Congress to wrest power from BJP in 2023 Assembly polls.

Further, it accused the Department of Mines and Geology of imposing "unscientific penalties" on contractors' vehicles and levying five times the royalty penalty in cases where Mineral Dispatch Permit is not submitted, contrary to earlier promises that the government would bear the difference. It claimed that Urban Development, Town Planning and Labour Department officials were converting tenders into packages to favour "powerful contractors". *—PTI*

MYSURU, 27 SEPT

The Indian Air Force conducted a scintillating Dasara Air Show at the Bannimantap Grounds in Mysuru on Saturday, enthralling the crowd.

The renowned Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team (SKAT) piloting Sarang HAL Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopters and Hawk Mk-132 jets put on a stunning display for at least 30 minutes.

The team, set up in 2003, painted Mysuru's skies with aerial artistry patriotic colours.

The highlight of the airshow was the Sarang Helicopter Display Team, which flew five Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) Dhruv, executing synchronised manoeuvres that had the crowd cheering from rooftops and balconies.

The helicopters carved dramatic patterns across the sky, including heart-shaped smoke trails, near-collision reversals, vertical climbs, coordinated flips and high-speed passes — showcasing breathtaking precision flying and skill.

Meanwhile, over fifty couples from various districts of the State took part in the heritage tonga ride *—Salar News*

Pak man, who crossed over to India, sent back

JAMM27 SEPT

A Pakistani national who inadvertently crossed into India was repatriated along the International Border in Jammu, officials said on Saturday. Mohd Akram, a resident of Pakistan, was apprehended by the Border Security Force (BSF) in the RS Pura sector on the outskirts of Jammu on 25 September. Officials confirmed that no incriminating material was found on him, and during questioning he admitted to having crossed the border by mistake. After completing the necessary formalities, the BSF contacted its Pakistani counterparts and handed Akram over to the Chenab Rangers during a flag meeting late on Friday. *—PTI*

Babbar Khalsa terrorist extradited from UAE

PUNJAB, 27 SEPT

Punjab Police, in coordination with central agencies, have extradited Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) operative Parminder Singh, alias Pindi, from Abu Dhabi, UAE. Punjab DGP Gaurav Yadav confirmed the extradition, describing it as a significant success in the fight against terrorism. Pindi, a close associate of foreign-based terrorists Harwinder Singh alias Rinda and Happy Passia, is accused of petrol bomb attacks, violent assaults, and extortion in Batala and Gurdaspur. Acting on a Red Corner Notice issued at Batala Police's request, a four-member Punjab Police team travelled to the UAE on 24 September, 2025, completing legal formalities with support from the Ministry of External Affairs and UAE authorities. The operation underlines the zero-tolerance towards crime. *—PTI*

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Kapil Sharma's PA gets Rs 1cr extortion call

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

Four days ago, comedian Kapil Sharma's PA received a call from a man claiming to be linked to the Bishnoi gang, demanding Rs 1 crore in extortion and threatening to kill him. The PA alerted Mumbai Police, who swiftly launched an investigation. The Crime Branch later arrested Dilip Choudhary from North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, and brought him to Mumbai. He has been remanded in police custody until 30 September, though no direct ties to the Bishnoi gang have been established. This comes after two firing incidents at Kapil Sharma's café in Surrey, Canada, which opened on 4 July, 2025. Police are interrogating the accused to uncover the motive behind the threat. *—AGENCIES*

Will destroy plant over pollution: T'gana Cong MLA

HYDERABAD, 27 SEPT

Congress MLA J Anirudh Reddy from Jadcherla, Telangana, has threatened to set fire to a pharmaceutical unit in his constituency on 28 September if pollution authorities fail to act. He alleged the plant has been releasing contaminated water, harming local farmers, and criticised the Pollution Control Board for inaction despite raising the matter in the Assembly. In a video aired by news channels, Reddy said he could no longer remain patient after repeated complaints were ignored. He warned that unless the board intervenes within a day, he would go to the factory at 11am on Sunday and burn it down. The remarks have sparked concern over both rampant violations of environmental norms and the MLA's threat of direct action against the pharma plant. *—PTI*

Curfew remains as uneasy calm envelops Ladakh

Security forces intensify patrolling after Wangchuk's arrest

LEH, 27 SEPT

For the first time since curfew was imposed three days ago in violence-hit Leh town of Ladakh, the restrictions were relaxed Saturday afternoon for four hours, providing relief to residents who lined up outside shops selling essential commodities.

Police and paramilitary forces intensified patrolling and checking since early this morning to maintain law and order following the detention of climate activist Sonam Wangchuk on 26 September.

The curfew was clamped in the town after widespread violence resulted in the death of four persons and injuries to 90 others during a shutdown called by the Leh Apex Body (LAB) to advance talks with the Centre on the demands for statehood and extension of the Sixth Schedule to Ladakh.

Lt Governor Kavinder Gupta chaired a high-level security review meeting at Raj Bhavan, after which the restrictions were eased.

People were also seen queuing outside ATM kiosks in good numbers as the police and CRPF personnel kept a vigil.

Wangchuk is being probed for allegedly having links with Pakistan following last month's arrest of a Pakistani intelligence operative who sent videos of his protests across the border.

Security has been tightened, with the police conducting raids to nab the absconding rioters who have been blamed for inciting violence in Leh *PHOTO: PTI*

> **Wangchuk who is working for our forces has been dubbed anti-national and arrested and you are playing cricket with Pakistan which spreads terror in India**
>
> -Uddhav Thackeray, Shiv Sena (UTB) Chief

The Lt Governor-led administration said the detention of Wangchuk was "important to restore normalcy" and also to prevent him from acting in a similar manner.

Patrolling and checking by police and paramilitary forces in the sensitive areas have been intensified, while raids are underway to nab the absconding rioters.

More than 50 persons were detained following the clashes.

The Ladakh Directorate of Information and Public Relations said that despite clear communication from the government regarding the meeting of the High-Powered Committee, Wangchuk, with his "ulterior motive", continued his hunger strike in the town.

The administration took a considered decision to detain Wangchuk under the NSA and move him to Jodhpur prison in Rajasthan. *—PTI*

A huge crowd gathers as TVK Chief Vijay addresses a political rally at Namakkal in Tamil Nadu on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

Vote for DMK is vote for BJP: TVK Chief Vijay

NAMAKKAL, 27 SEPT

Embarking on his campaign in the western Kongu region for the first time, TVK chief Vijay said a vote for Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK in the 2026 Assembly election is a vote for the BJP and slammed the main opposition AIADMK's alliance with the Saffron party as "inappropriate and opportunistic."

In his address, Vijay alleged the "DMK family" has underground dealing with the BJP and hence, a vote for DMK is a vote for the BJP and reiterated that the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam will never make any compromises with the "fascist BJP regime."

Hitting out at the main opposition AIADMK for forgetting the ideals of late party matriarch J Jayalalithaa despite often "chanting Amma's name," he said it has forged an inappropriate, and unsuitable alliance with BJP and it is also opportunistic.

> **The unfortunate incident during a political rally in Karur in Tamil Nadu is deeply saddening. My thoughts are with those who lost their loved ones. Wishing strength to them**
>
> -Narendra Modi. Prime Minister

TVK is ordinary people's voice while DMK loots Tamil Nadu and the 2026 Assembly election fight is between TVK and DMK, he said. Meanwhile, it was a day of celebration and excitement in the western parts of the state from dawn on Saturday. Vijay was welcomed with cheers. *—PTI*

India, Brazil, South Africa condemn Israeli attack on Gaza

NEW YORK, 27 SEPT

India, Brazil and South Africa have strongly condemned the ongoing Israeli attacks on Gaza and expressed grave concern over the situation in the "occupied" Palestinian territory.

The issue figured prominently at a meeting of the trilateral grouping IBSA that took place on the margins of the UN General Assembly.

It was attended by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira and South African minister Sindisiwe Chikunga.

The IBSA's strong condemnation of the ongoing Israeli attacks on Gaza came days after Canada, the UK and Australia formally recognised the Palestine state in the face of the continuing Israeli strikes on Gaza.

The trilateral grouping especially deplored the "use of starvation" as a method of warfare and reiterated its call for a permanent ceasefire, leading to the cessation of Israeli attacks, the full withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Strip as well as the release of remaining hostages by Hamas.

It said they also called for adherence to international law and deplored all violations of humanitarian law.

They stressed the urgent need for the beginning of the reconstruction of the civilian infrastructure of the Strip and, in this regard, noted the Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan adopted by the League of Arab States.

The IBSA ministers recalled that the Gaza Strip is an inseparable part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

It also strongly condemned the "gruesome killings. *—PTI*

Cong flays PM's Rs 10K 'Revdi' for Bihar women

NEW DELHI, 27 SEP

The Congress party has taken a jab at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the government's announcement to provide Rs 10,000 to 75 lakh women in Bihar. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh accused the Prime Minister of indulging in "vote revdi" (vote doles) alongside his alleged "vote chori" (vote theft).

In a post on X, Ramesh pointed out that while Modi had previously criticised the Karnataka government's Griha Lakshmi scheme, which offers Rs 2,000 per month to 1.3 crore women, he is now implementing a similar initiative in Bihar. "The Prime Minister has been continuously criticising it," Ramesh noted.

He emphasised that the Prime Minister's announcement, which came just before the implementation of the election code of conduct, represents a desperate measure. He stated, "Along with 'vote chori', the Prime Minister is now also engaged in distributing vote 'revri'. This is clearly a desperate step, which the women of Bihar will understand very well."

Modi launched the Mukhya Mantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana, aimed at supporting women's self-employment and livelihood activities, ahead of the upcoming Bihar assembly elections. *—PTI*

'Oppn want voting rights for foreigners'

PATNA/ARARIA, 27 SEPT

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and RJD president Lalu Prasad of attempting to "secure voting rights for infiltrators". Speaking at a BJP workers' conclave in Araria, Bihar, on Saturday, Shah expressed his determination to expel all infiltrators if the NDA retains power with a two-thirds majority in the upcoming assembly elections.

"Rahul baba took out a Yatra here recently... to oppose the special intensive revision of electoral rolls by the Election Commission, which aims to remove infiltrators' names from the voters' list," Shah stated, referencing the recent "Voter Adhikar Yatra" led by Gandhi and Tejashwi Yadav.

He questioned the BJP cadres, "Should we allow this?" prompting a resounding "no" from the audience. Shah promised that "each and every infiltrator will be driven out of Bihar" should the NDA secure 160 or more seats.

Shah claimed that the Modi administration "has not been charged with misappropriation of even 25 paise" in the last 11 years, contrasting it with the Congress-led UPA's corruption allegations.

He also mentioned ongoing developmental projects in Bihar. *—PTI*

Parl panels' tenure to be extended by 2 yrs

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

Government is mulling extending the tenure of parliamentary standing committees to two years, after some lawmakers complained that twwwWhe current one-year term was too short to make any meaningful contribution.

The government will take a decision in this regard after consultations with Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Rajya Sabha Chairman CP Radhakrishnan. The new term of the parliamentary panels usually starts either late September or early October, depending on the date on which the committees, often described as 'mini-parliaments', are constituted.Parliament sources said that some members had requested the government to extend the tenure of the committees from the present one year to at least two years so that the panels can effectively address the subjects.*—PTI*

PM unveils Rs 60K cr projects in Odisha

JHARSUGUDA, 27 SEPT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled development projects exceeding Rs 60,000 crore in varied sectors, including telecommunications and railways, from Jharsuguda on Saturday. The initiatives include the foundation laying for the expansion of eight IITs across India, set to accommodate 10,000 additional students over four years, and the launch of the Amrit Bharat Express connecting Berhampur to Udhna in Gujarat.

Modi dedicated the doubling of the 34km Koraput–Baiguda rail line and the 82km Manabar–Koraput–Gorapur section, while also inaugurating 97,500 4G telecom towers utilising BSNL's indigenous technology. A 5km flyover in Sambalpur City, costing Rs 273 crore, was also opened.

Odisha Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati, PM Narendra Modi and CM Mohan Charan Majhi while inaugurating projects in Odisha *PHOTO: PTI*

Addressing a rally, Modi alleged that the Congress party "left no opportunity to loot people," even taxing those with an annual income of Rs 2 lakh, while the BJP government raised the limit to over Rs 12 lakh.

He stressed Odisha's rapid progress under the "double-engine" government model and highlighted advancements in technology, stating that India is now among the five nations offering indigenous 4G services. *—PTI*

LONGING FOR FAMILY

Was shackled: Woman deported from US

CANADIGARH, 27 SEPT

A 73-year-old woman, who was deported from the US recently after spending more than three decades there, on Saturday said no one should go through the ordeal she went through, and expressed her desire to be reunited with her family in America.

Kaur, who had unsuccessfully applied for asylum in the US, was deported to India after being detained by immigration authorities in California.

Kaur reached the US in 1992 as a single mother with two sons. Her asylum case was denied in 2012, but since then, she "faithfully reported" to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in San Francisco every six months for more than 13 years, her daughter-in-law Manji said.

Kaur had unsuccessfully applied for asylum in the US *PHOTO: AI*

- Kaur reached the US in 1992 as a single mother with two sons. Her asylum case was denied in 2012, but since then, she "faithfully reported" to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in San Francisco every six months for more than 13 years, her daughter-in-law Manji said.

Kaur was sent back without being given the chance to even say goodbye to her close family members.

"I had a work permit, an ID and a licence. I had everything," she rued..

"They took my photograph and kept me in the room for the entire night. It was cold, and I couldn't even lie down," said Kaur, who had undergone a double knee replacement surgery.

"I was cuffed and shackled when they took me from San Francisco to Bakersfield," she said.

She was neither able to eat the non-vegetarian food they served her nor take her medicines.

According to Kaur, she was deported along with 132 deportees on board the plane, including 15 Colombian nationals.

Her entire family now resides in the US.

Asked if she was cuffed on the plane, Kaur said, "No. There were two good officers on board who did not cuff me, although the other deportees were cuffed and shackled."

She also held US President Donald Trump solely responsible for the deportation of a large number of Indians in recent months. *—PTI*

Delhi BMW case: Court grants bail to accused

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

A Delhi court has granted bail to Gaganpreet Kaur, the main suspect in a fatal BMW accident, stating that the allegation of culpable homicide rested on a "fragile foundation" after reviewing the CCTV footage of the incident. Kaur was alleged to have been driving the car that struck a motorcycle on 14 September, killing Navjot Singh, 52, a senior Finance Ministry official, and seriously injuring his wife.

Judicial Magistrate Ankit Garg noted that the video showed the BMW losing control, hitting a divider, overturning and then colliding with the motorcycle and a passing DTC bus, rather than a deliberate high-speed ramming as first claimed. The court rapped an ambulance driver and paramedic who reached the scene within seconds but failed to assist the unconscious victim, calling their conduct "highly unprofessional and unethical".

This "golden-hour lapse", it said, undermined the prosecution's claim that Singh died due to delayed care by the accused.

It also criticised the bus driver for driving away after the accident had taken place

.The judge underlined that bail is the norm and jail the exception, noting that the case was closer to rash or negligent driving than to culpable homicide.

The court found no grounds for custodial interrogation og the accused

Kaur was released on a bond of Rs 1 lakh. However, the court ordered her to surrender her passport and barred from contacting witnesses in the case. . *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Boxer Mary Kom's home in Delhi robbed

SHILLONG, 27 SEPT

Thieves broke into the Delhi residence of six-time world boxing champion Mary Kom on Saturday, while she was in Meghalaya attending a marathon event in Sohra, officials confirmed. Kom reportedly informed the organisers during the event that she had received news of the burglary at her home in the Capital. The extent of the damage and details of the items stolen are yet to be established, officials added. One of India's most celebrated athletes, Kom hails from Manipur and has brought the country international acclaim through her achievements in boxing. Police investigations are under way, with officers expected to record statements and conduct a detailed assessment of the crime scene. *—PTI*

VC Sajjanar named Hyderabad Police Chief

HYDERABAD, 27 SEPT

In a significant reshuffle, the Telangana government has appointed VC Sajjanar as Hyderabad Police Commissioner, replacing CV Anand, now Special Chief Secretary (Home). Sajjanar, previously Managing Director of the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC), is credited with steering the corporation towards profitability. Earlier, as Cyberabad Police Commissioner, he oversaw operations during the 2019 veterinary doctor's rape and murder case, when the four accused were killed in a police encounter. Y Nagi Reddy, formerly Director General of Disaster Response and Fire Services, succeeds Sajjanar as TSRTC Managing Director. The reshuffle involved transfers of 23 IPS and six IAS officers. Additionally, intelligence chief B Shivadhar Reddy was appointed director general of police. *—PTI*

Kerala ex-chief minister's daughter no more

T'PURAM, 27 SEPT

Senior paediatrician Dr Malathy Damodaran, daughter of Communist leader and Kerala's first Chief Minister EMS Namboodiripad, has died in Thiruvananthapuram following age-related ailments. She was 87. Dr Damodaran passed away at her residence in Sasthamangalam on Saturday morning. A respected health practitioner, she was widely known for her work in paediatrics and is survived by a son and a daughter. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan condoled her death, calling her "a daughter who lived by the ideals of her father." He praised her contributions to the health sector, highlighting her simplicity and "scientific social perspective." People from diverse fields also expressed grief. *—PTI*

SC questions IIT on student's medical transfer

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

The Supreme Court has sought response from IIT Kharagpur, IIT Delhi, and AIIMS regarding a plea from a first-year bachelor of architecture student with borderline personality disorder seeking a transfer to IIT Delhi. The bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and R Mahadevan directed responses, returnable on 10 October, 2025. The petitioner said he was denied transfer despite complying with all rules and precedents. He requires specialised repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation therapy, available only at AIIMS Delhi, and parental supervision. The plea argued that IIT Kharagpur's refusal blocked life-saving treatment, despite the institute approving similar transfers previously. He requested a writ to the institutes to process his transfer. *—PTI*

'I love Muhammad' stir rocks UP

Tensions escalate in Baranki, Mau post Bareilly clashes; forces deployed

BAREILLY/BARABANKI/ VARANASI, 27 SEPT

Tensions flared across multiple districts in Uttar Pradesh following Friday's violence in Bareilly over the "I Love Muhammad" campaign, leading to arrests, heightened security, and concerns over communal unrest.

Police confirmed the arrest of Maulana Tauqeer Raza Khan and seven others in Bareilly for allegedly inciting violence after Friday prayers. The unrest sparked similar tensions in Barabanki, Mau, and Varanasi, prompting overnight raids and strict monitoring of social media platforms.

In Faizullaganj village, Barabanki, a banner reading "I Love Muhammad" was allegedly brought down by a local watchman, Dhanni, using a stick. This triggered a confrontation between communities. Dhanni's house was later vandalised, and his wife claimed valuables were stolen. CCTV footage reportedly confirmed his involvement. Senior police officials rushed to the scene and restored order.

Police lathicharged the protesters amid protests over the 'I love Muhammad' campaign in Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh on 26 September *PHOTO: PTI*

In Mau, a group chanting "I Love Muhammad" took out a procession in the Nai Bazaar area after Friday prayers. Police dispersed the crowd using batons. A video of the incident has circulated widely online. SP Ilamaran confirmed ongoing monitoring and action. In Varanasi, police arrested eight individuals, including a juvenile, for an unauthorised procession on 22 September. The group allegedly carried banners, blocked traffic, played loud music, and raised slogans, creating public panic and violating communal harmony. 500 individuals are being identified via CCTV in Bareilly, The police said a march had been proposed earlier, but organisers were informed written permission was required.

> **A Maulana forgot who is in power in the state. He thought he could halt the system whenever he wanted, but we made it clear that there would be neither a roadblock nor a curfew**
>
> -Yogi Adityanath, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, addressing the situation, warned that disruption of law and order would not be tolerated. *—PTI*

Christ's pic from pooja pandal pulled off post VHP stir

RANCHI, 27 SEPT

Following protests by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), organisers of a Durga Pooja in Ranchi, Jharkhand, have replaced an image of Jesus Christ with that of Lord Krishna in their Vatican City-themed pandal. VHP claimed that the original display "hurt the religious sentiments of Hindus" and encouraged conversion, allegations which the RR Sporting Club, who organised the festival, denied.

Club patron Vicky Yadav stated, "It was not due to the protest by a certain section but by our committee members to show all religions on the same platform." The European-style statues outside the pandal remain unchanged.

Yadav explained that the theme aimed to promote peace and brotherhood, asserting. "India stands for religious harmony," he emphasized. *—PTI*

Thousands moved to camps as rains lash states

HYDERABAD/ C'SAMBHAJINAGAR, 27 SEPT

Heavy rains created havoc across several states, with people stranded and several areas cut off.

About 1,000 people living in low-lying areas in Telangana's Hyderabad were shifted to relief camps as the Musi river was in spate following heavy rains in the city and other parts.

The flood water entered a bus complex, prompting authorities to halt the bus services.

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy directed officials to take precautionary measures by monitoring the situation in all localities adjacent to the Musi river and shift people to relief camps.

The water level in Musi river rose after the gates of Hyderabad's twin reservoirs -- Himayatsagar and Osmansagar -- were raised following the heavy rains.

Heavy rainfall was forecast in several districts.

Meanwhile, incessant rains pounded several parts of Marathwada in Maharashtra , cutting off villages and inundating low-lying roads and bridges.

The water-logged bridges and roads were shut. Rescue teams shifted stranded villagers to safety.

An orange alert was sounded in Nanded, Latur, Beed, Hingoli, Parbhani and Dharashiv districts.

Rains claimed nine lives and destroyed crops Marathwada.

A depression over the Bay of Bengal brought heavy rains in several districts of Odisha.

An orange alert was sounded for Nabarangpur, while a yellow alert was on in Koraput, Malkangiri, Rayagada, Gajapati, Ganjam, Kalahandi and Nuapada districts. People were asked to remain alert.

An orange alert was sounded in Mumbai and suburbs on Saturday. Tides were also forecast in the Arabian Sea on Saturday. *—PTI*

The Musi river flows in spate through the under-construction Moosarambagh bridge in Hyderabad in Telangana on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

The two cadres were arrested days after the police arrested the main accused of the ambush *PHOTO: X/ MANIPUR_POLICE*

2 held for ambush on jawans in Manipur

IMPHAL, 27 SEPT

The security forces have arrested two members of a banned militant group for their alleged roles in the ambush on an Assam Rifles convoy in Manipur on 19 September, which resulted in the deaths of two personnel, the police confirmed on Saturday.

According to a police statement, "Two cadres of the People's Liberation Army, who were mainly involved in the 19 September ambush on 33 Assam Rifles at Nambol Sabal Leikai, Bishnupur district, have been arrested." One suspect was apprehended in Guwahati, Assam, while details of the other arrest's location remain undisclosed.

The arrested militants have been identified as Thongram Sadananda Singh, 18, and self-styled Lt Corpl Chongtham Mahesh, 51. Police noted that Chongtham is a senior member of the banned PLA and has been linked to the organisation since 1990.

This development follows the apprehension of the prime accused in the ambush just days prior in Kameng, Imphal West district. The PLA primarily operates from camps in neighbouring Myanmar.

Search operations have intensified in Manipur. *—PTI*

5 dead as speeding SUV crashes in Gurugram

GURURAM, 27 SEPT

Five people died and one was critically injured after a Mahindra Thar crashed into a divider on the Delhi–Gurugram Expressway early Saturday, police said.

The victims were identified as Pratishtha, 25, Lavnya, 26, Aditya, 30, Gautam, 31 and Soni, while Kapil Sharma, 27 is receiving treatment in hospital.

The accident occurred near Exit 9 when the speeding vehicle lost control and struck the central barrier.

A police team from Sector 40 rushed to the scene and took all six to hospital, where doctors confirmed five dead on arrival.

Police said Pratishtha and Lavnya were law students, while the others worked in advertising. The SUV was registered in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, where the group had travelled from.

Reports suggest one victim was the daughter of a judge, though police have not confirmed this.

The police are investigating the matter to ascertain the cause of the crash. *—PTI*

India's 1st bullet train to be operational by 2029

SURAT, 27 SEPT

India's first bullet train project is progressing rapidly, with the first 50km stretch between Surat and Bilimora in Gujarat set to open by 2027, according to Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.

The Thane–Ahmedabad section will be operational by 2028, and the full Mumbai–Ahmedabad corridor by 2029. Once complete, the high-speed train will cover the Mumbai–Ahmedabad route in just 2 hours and 7 minutes, travelling at speeds of up to 320km/h.

Vaishnaw highlighted the use of advanced technology to ensure safety and efficiency, including vibration-absorbing mechanisms, composite sleepers, and roller-bearing turnouts.

The first turnout was installed at the under-construction Surat station, where heavy construction work has been completed. The project is expected to boost economic integration between major cities along the route, similar to Japan's experience with bullet trains.

The government also plans to launch four additional high-speed corridors across northern, eastern, and southern India in the future. *—PTI*

Cops look out for Zubeen's manager, organiser

GUWAHATI, 27 SEPT

- Mahanta's bank accounts have been frozen. Garg's autopsy report from Singapore is awaited, while the second autopsy report at GMCH is ready.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that lookout notices have been issued for Shyamkanu Mahanta, organiser of the North East India Festival, and Siddharth Sharma, manager of late singer Zubeen Garg, following Garg's demise on 19 September.

During a Facebook live session, Sarma stated, "They must come to Guwahati on 6 October and present their statements. If they do not want to present themselves before the CID, they can approach the court."

To expedite their appearance, Mahanta's bank accounts have been frozen. Sarma is also awaiting Garg's autopsy report from Singapore, while the second post-mortem at Gauhati Medical College is "ready".

He wrote to the chief justice of Gauhati High Court, proposing a judicial commission for transparency. Furthermore, he indicated that the case could be handed over to the CBI if Assam Police cannot secure justice.

Gauhati University to rename centre after Zubeen

The Gauhati University in Assam plans to rename its Centre for Performing Arts after Garg and set up a status in honour of the singer and his immortal works. *—PTI*

Builders raided in homebuyers' fraud

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) conducted searches at 12 locations across Kolkata, Bengaluru, and Mumbai following the registration of six cases against builders and officials of financial institutions accused of defrauding homebuyers. This action was prompted by complaints from homebuyers to the Supreme Court, alleging misconduct by both builders and financial institutions.

The Court had previously identified a "nexus" between builders and financial institutions and directed the CBI to initiate seven preliminary enquiries, leading to the discovery of further irregularities. A CBI spokesperson stated, "Upon perusal of the report submitted by the CBI, the Hon'ble Supreme Court directed CBI to register six regular cases against different builders in Kolkata, Bengaluru, and Mumbai." The searches resulted in the seizure of various incriminating documents and digital evidence of the alleged fraud. *—PTI*

Kerala hamlet opposes new brewery

PALAKKAD, 27 SEPT

Villagers in Elappully, Kerala, staged a protest on Saturday against a proposed brewery project by Oasis Commercial Pvt Ltd.

The agitation, joined by Congress and BJP workers, began when the company deployed an earthmover to clear trees and plants at the site. Protesters accused the firm of beginning construction and halted the machine, raising slogans against the alcohol unit.

A company representative denied construction had started, saying the work was only to clean the land ahead of a contour survey and to plan rainwater harvesting. The Kerala cabinet had approved the project in January, subject to conditions, but the Opposition has demanded its withdrawal. Villagers fear the brewery will worsen scarcity of drinking water in the region.

"Our aim is to protect our water sources. We don't want any brewery unit here that will produce liquor," one elderly protester said. *—PTI*

52.4% OF TOTAL POLLUTANTS

Packaging waste pollutes Ganga

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

Packaging waste is the most prevalent form of plastic pollution in a high-biodiversity stretch of the Ganga river that supports several endangered species, a new survey has found.

The section in Jharkhand, between Lal Bathani and Radhanagar in Sahibganj district, was selected because it includes a 34-km high-biodiversity zone that supports endangered species such as the Gangetic dolphin and smooth-coated otter.

The study, published in the journal Sustainability by researchers from the Wildlife Institute of India, documented 37,730 debris items across 76 km of the Ganga.

Packaging waste accounted for 52.4% of the total, comprising food wrappers, single-use sachets and plastic bags.

Packaging waste accounted maximum of the total pollutants, comprising of food wrappers, single-use sachets and bags *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

Plastic fragments were the second-largest category at 23.3%, followed by tobacco-related litter at 5% and single-use at 4.7%. Fishing gear, textiles and medical plastics were present in smaller amounts.

Floodplains showed the heaviest pollution, with densities of 6.95 items per square metre, nearly 28 times higher than river shorelines.

Rural and urban areas, as well as, high- and low-population-density sites showed similar levels of waste.

Floods replenished debris by carrying waste into the river post-monsoon. *—PTI*

Kaziranga has record 283 species of insects, spiders

GUWAHATI, 27 SEPT

Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, renowned for its rhinos, elephants, and tigers, has recorded a remarkable 283 species of native insects and spiders, according to a recent survey published on Saturday.

The study, conducted by entomologists from the Corbett Foundation with assistance from park staff, found that 254 species are insects and 29 are spiders. Notably, the survey identified 85 species of butterflies and moths, 40 species of ants, bees, and wasps, and 35 species of beetles.

The report, titled 'Explorative Study of Insects and Spiders of the Woodland Habitat of Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve', emphasises the urgent need for insect conservation amidst climate change's threat to biodiversity.

An insect found at the Kaziranga Nationa Park *PHOTO: X*

"While Kaziranga is celebrated for its megafauna, its resilience depends just as much on small pollinators and natural pest-controllers," officials noted. The findings highlight the role of these species in maintaining ecosystem health, vital for seed dispersal and soil regeneration. *—PTI*

FROM ANIME TO ACTIVISM

‘One Piece’ flag becomes global symbol of Gen Z stir

From Paris and Rome to Jakarta, Indonesia, and New York, a curious banner has appeared in protest squares. With hollow cheeks, a broad grin and a straw hat with a red band, the figure is instantly recognizable and has been hoisted by young demonstrators calling for change. In Kathmandu, Nepal, where anger at the government boiled over in September 2025, the flag became the defining image as flames spread through the gates of Singha Durbar, Nepal’s ornate palace complex and seat of power.

The image, usually adorning a flag with a black background, comes from ‘One Piece’, a much-beloved Japanese manga.

And what began as a fictional pirate crew’s emblem almost three decades ago has become a powerful symbol of youth-led resistance, appearing in demonstrations from Indonesia and Nepal to the Philippines and France.

As a scholar of media and democracy, we see the spread of the Jolly Roger of the Straw Hats Pirates, which has gone from manga pages to protest squares, as an example of how Gen Z is reshaping the cultural vocabulary of dissent.

What began as a fictional pirate crew’s emblem nearly three decades ago has now become a powerful symbol of youth-led resistance in protests across Nepal, the Philippines and for Gaza **PHOTOS: SCREENGRAB**

POP CULTURE AS POLITICAL EXPRESSION

‘One Piece’ arrived at the birth of Gen-Z, created in 1997 by Japanese manga artist Eiichiro Oda.

Since then, it has sold more than 500 million copies and has a Guinness World Record for its publishing success.

It has spawned a long-running TV series, live-action films and a more-than-US$20 billion industry, with merchandise licensing alone generating about $720 million each year from Bandai Namco, the company best known for creating Pac-Man and Tekken.

At its core, ‘One Piece’ follows Monkey D Luffy and his crew, the Straw Hat Pirates, as they challenge a corrupt world government while seeking freedom and adventure.

For fans, the ‘One Piece’ flag is not a casual decoration but an emblem of defiance and perseverance. Luffy’s ability to stretch beyond physical limits after consuming a magical fruit has become a powerful metaphor for resilience, while his unwavering quest for freedom against impossible odds resonates with young people navigating political environments marked by corruption, inequality and authoritarian excess.

When protesters adopt this flag, they are not simply importing an aesthetic from popular culture, but are drawing on a narrative already legible to millions. The flag began cropping up in protests over the past few years. It was being waved at a “Free Palestine” protest in 2023 in Indonesia and in the same year in New York during a pro-Palestinian demonstration.

But it was in Indonesia in August 2025 that the flag’s political life truly took hold. There, protesters embraced it to voice frustration with government policies and mounting discontent over corruption and inequality. The timing coincided with government calls for patriotic displays during independence celebrations, sharpening the contrast between official nationalism and grassroots dissent.

The movement gained momentum when authorities responded with strong criticism of the flag’s use, inadvertently drawing more attention to the symbol. Government officials characterized the displays as threats to national unity, while protesters viewed them as legitimate expressions of political frustration.

WHY THE FLAG TRAVELS

The speed with which the ‘One Piece’ Jolly Roger flag spread across borders reflects the digital upbringing of Gen Z. This is the first cohort to grow up fully online, immersed in memes, anime and global entertainment franchises. Their political communication relies on what scholars call “networked publics” – communities that form and act through digital platforms rather than formal organizations.

Solidarity in this setting does not require party membership or ideology. Instead, it depends on shared cultural references. A meme, gesture or flag can instantly carry meaning across divides of language, religion or geography. This form of connection is built on recognizable cultural codes that allow young people to identify with each other even when their political systems differ.

Social media gives this solidarity reach and speed. Videos of Indonesians waving the flag were clipped and reshared on TikTok and Instagram, reaching audiences far beyond their original context. By the time the symbol appeared in Kathmandu, the Nepalese capital, in September, it already carried the aura of youthful defiance.

Crucially, this was not simple imitation. In Nepal, the flag was tied to anger at youth unemployment and at the ostentatious wealth of political dynasties displayed online. In Indonesia, it reflected disillusionment with patriotic rituals that felt hollow against a backdrop of corruption. In both cases, the Jolly Roger flag worked like open-source code – adaptable locally but instantly legible elsewhere. Part of the flag’s effectiveness comes from its ambiguity. Unlike a party logo, the ‘One Piece’ Jolly Roger flag originates in popular culture, which makes it difficult for governments to suppress without appearing authoritarian. During the latest protests in Indonesia, authorities confiscated banners and labeled them treasonous. But such crackdowns only amplified public frustration.

FICTION AS REALITY

The ‘One Piece’ flag is not alone in being reimagined as a symbol of resistance.

Across movements worldwide, pop culture and digital culture have become a potent resources for activists. In Chile and Beirut, demonstrators wore Joker masks as a visual shorthand for anger at corruption and inequality. In Thailand, demonstrators turned to ‘Hamtaro’, a children’s anime about a hamster, parodying its theme song and waving plush toys to lampoon political leaders.

This blending of politics, entertainment and personal identity reflects a hybrid media environment in which symbols drawn from fandom gain power. They are easy to recognize, adapt and defend against state repression.

Yet cultural resonance alone does not explain the appeal. The ‘One Piece’ flag caught on because it captured real-life grievances. In Nepal, where youth unemployment exceeds 20 per cent and migration for work is common, protesters paired the emblem with slogans such as “Gen Z won’t be silent” and “Our future is not for sale.”

In Indonesia, some protesters argued that the national flag was “too sacred” to be flown in a corrupt system, using the pirate banner as a statement of disillusionment.

The spread of the flag also reflects a broader shift in how protest ideas move across borders. In the past, what tended to travel were tactics such as sit-ins, marches or hunger strikes. Today, what circulates fastest are symbols, visual references from global culture that can be adapted to local struggles while remaining instantly recognizable elsewhere.

THE FLAG GOES GLOBAL

The flag’s journey from Asian streets to protests in France and Slovakia demonstrates how the grammar of dissent has gone global. For today’s young activists, culture and politics are inseparable. Digital nativity has produced a generation that communicates grievances through memes, symbols and cultural references that cross borders with ease.

When protesters in Jakarta, Kathmandu or Manila wave the ‘One Piece’ Jolly Roger flag, they are not indulging in play-acting but transforming a cultural icon into a living emblem of defiance.

—The Conversation

SALAR سالار

TN’s edu schemes changes lives of poor students

- The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister’s ‘breakfast scheme’, another initiative, addresses challenges of nutrition among children while encouraging regular school attendance.

A gesture by the Tamil Nadu government has brought a significant transformation in the lives of underprivileged children, enabling them to fulfil their aspiration to pursue education.

The monthly scholarship of Rs 1,000 under the ‘Tamil Pudhalvan’ and ‘Pudhumai Penn’ schemes for state-run school students, along with the skilling programme under the ‘Naan Mudhalvan’ platform, has helped many rural children begin realising their ambitions of becoming graduates, engineers, doctors or advocates.

“These initiatives of the education department are making high school and higher education accessible to scores of students, fuelling their desire to study for better prospects in life,” officials said.

“I stopped asking my relatives and others for money to study. The monthly grant under ‘Pudhumai Penn’ has helped me to study the EEE course,” said Subbalakshmi of Ranipet.

Her father, a goat rearer, and her mother, a daily wage earner, could not afford to send her to college.

“Thank you, CM (MK Stalin) sir, for providing the assistance under ‘Pudhumai Penn’. I hope to complete my course and realise my ambition to become a math teacher. I wish that you extend this assistance to students pursuing PG courses,” Subbalakshmi, now in her third year of college, said at a state government event to celebrate the success of the special initiatives to improve education—’Tamil Nadu Excels in Education’ — held here on 25 September.

Immediately, the Chief Minister remarked, “So, you want to become a math teacher. Come here, teacher, a present is awaiting you.”

To everyone’s surprise, Stalin took out his pen from his shirt pocket, handed it to her and blessed her.

An emotional Subbalakshmi bowed at the feet of the chief minister, Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin, and Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, seeking their blessings.

In Sathya’s case, 34, the scheme encouraged her to join a CSE course in a government polytechnic institute along with her son, and both are now in their third year. Ramya of Thanjavur said she saved Rs 100 each month from her scholarship and, after a year, bought a hearing aid for her mother, who had hearing difficulties. “My father is a daily wage earner. I will never let my parents down. I will succeed in life and take care of them,” she said, tears welling in her eyes.

At the event, School Education Minister Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi was seen wiping his eyes as beneficiaries shared their ordeals and expressed their determination to study, crediting the state government’s schemes.

“The schemes of the Dravidian model government are bringing significant change to every family. It is heartening to see our children achieving in life. These tears are tears of joy,” he said later in a post on ‘X’.

Athlete Rosy Meena expressed gratitude to Udhayanidhi Stalin, who holds the sports portfolio, for providing her with a Rs 1.5 lakh pole vault, enabling her to participate in competitions.

The event also showcased students who had pursued higher education abroad.

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister’s ‘breakfast scheme’, another initiative, addresses challenges of nutrition among children while encouraging regular school attendance.

“This scheme addresses the daily nutritional needs of poor children who do not have access to meals at home,” Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said at the event, assuring its implementation in his state.

He is the second Chief Minister, after Punjab’s Bhagwant Mann, to announce plans to adopt the scheme inspired by Tamil Nadu. *—PTI*

The monthly scholarship of Rs 1,000 under the ‘Tamil Pudhalvan’ and ‘Pudhumai Penn’ schemes for state-run school students has helped many rural children **PHOTO: PTI**

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Hungrier, poorer & anxious Iran braces for return of UN sanctions

As Iran prepares for the reimposition of United Nations sanctions over its nuclear programme, the country’s 85 million people face a worsening economic and humanitarian crisis marked by hunger, repression, and growing fears of war.

From midnight GMT on Sunday (8 pm Eastern), the so-called “snapback” mechanism—built into the 2015 Iran nuclear deal—will take effect, reactivating a series of harsh sanctions unless a last-minute diplomatic breakthrough occurs. These include a freeze on Iranian assets abroad, a ban on arms deals, and penalties targeting Iran’s ballistic missile programme.

Snapback, triggered by France, Germany, and the UK in response to Iran’s reduced cooperation with nuclear monitors, is veto-proof at the UN Security Council, rendering opposition from China and Russia ineffective.

A NATION UNDER PRESSURE

Ordinary Iranians are bearing the brunt of a collapsing economy. The rial has plunged to a historic low, pushing food prices beyond the reach of many. Once-common staples such as meat, rice, and butter have become luxuries. The government’s official inflation rate stood at 34.5per cent in June, but the cost of food items soared over 50 per cent year-on-year.

On the ground, the situation feels even more severe. Prices of pinto beans have tripled, butter has nearly doubled, and rice has increased by more than 80per cent, even 100per cent for premium varieties. Chicken prices are up 26 per cent, with similar hikes across the board.

“Every day I see new higher prices for cheese, milk, and butter,” said Sima Taghavi, a mother of two shopping at a Tehran grocery. “I cannot omit them like fruits and meat because my kids are too young to be deprived.”

Sina, a father of a 12-year-old, compared the hardship to the brutal 1980s Iran-Iraq War: “For as long as I can remember, we’ve been struggling with economic hardship, and every year it’s worse than the last. For my generation, it’s always either too late or too early, our dreams are slipping away.”

THE FALLOUT OF WAR AND ISOLATION

The worsening economic crisis follows the devastating 12-day war in June, which saw Iranian and allied positions bombarded by Israel and the US. Missile sites destroyed during the conflict are reportedly being rebuilt. In response, Iran expelled inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), further alarming international powers already wary of its nuclear intentions.

The worsening economic crisis follows the devastating 12-day war in June, which saw Iranian and allied positions bombarded by Israel and the US **PHOTO: PTI**

Iran maintains a stockpile of uranium enriched to 60per cent, just short of the 90per cent needed for weapons-grade material, enough for several atomic bombs if it chose to pursue them. Tehran continues to insist its nuclear programme is purely peaceful, though Western intelligence and the IAEA maintain Iran had an organised weapons programme until 2003.

Kelsey Davenport, a nuclear expert at the Washington-based Arms Control Association, warned that the absence of international inspections raises the risk of further military conflict. “In the short term, kicking out the IAEA increases the risk of miscalculation. The US or Israel could use the lack of inspections as a pretext for further strikes.”

Davenport added, “The Trump administration appears to think it has a stronger hand post-strikes and can wait for Iran to come back to the table. Given the knowledge and materials Iran still possesses, that’s a dangerous assumption.”

Iran argues that the snapback mechanism is illegitimate, especially since the US unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear accord in 2018 under President Donald Trump. Nevertheless, Iran recalled its ambassadors from France, Germany, and the UK on Saturday in protest.

MENTAL HEALTH & RISING REPRESSION

The economic and geopolitical turmoil has taken a severe toll on public mental health. Clinics report a rise in patients seeking psychological help, particularly since the June war.

“The psychological pressure from the 12-day war on the one hand, and runaway inflation and price hikes on the other, has left society exhausted and unmotivated,” said Dr Sima Ferdowsi, a clinical psychologist at Shahid Beheshti University. “If the economic situation continues like this, it will have serious social and moral consequences. People may do things they would never think of doing in normal circumstances to survive.”

SURGE IN EXECUTIONS AND CRACKDOWNS

Amid fears of further unrest, Iran’s regime has responded with an intensified crackdown. Over 1,000 people have been executed in 2025 so far, according to the Oslo-based Iran Human Rights group and the US-based Abdorrahman Boroumand Centre for Human Rights in Iran—the highest rate since the mass executions at the end of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988.

The Islamic Republic has faced multiple waves of protests in recent years, including mass demonstrations in 2022 following the death of Mahsa Amini, a young woman detained over her hijab. Calls for reform, economic relief, and civil rights have been met with violence and repression.

“The political and civic space in Iran has shrunk to nothing,” the Boroumand Centre said. “Outside Iran, civil society activists and dissidents face transnational repression. The Iranian people, millions of whom aspire to more than a closed and brutal theocracy, have tried every option within their reach. Their leaders have not.”

As the snapback sanctions come into force and the threat of war looms, the Iranian public faces an uncertain and increasingly perilous future, caught between external pressure, internal repression, and a deteriorating standard of living. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Don asks Microsoft to dismiss firm's Prez Lisa Monaco

WASHINGTON, 27 SEPT

US President Donald Trump has urged Microsoft Corp to terminate the employment of Lisa Monaco, the firm's global affairs president, citing her previous roles in Democratic administrations. Trump claimed Monaco, who formerly served as a security aide under Barack Obama and as deputy attorney general under Joe Biden, poses a "menace to US National Security." He stressed that her access to sensitive information is "unacceptable" and suggested her connections to Microsoft, given the company's major contracts with the government, are problematic. Trump noted that Monaco's security clearances were revoked in February and that she has been banned from federal properties due to "her many wrongful acts." Microsoft is yet to respond. *—Agencies*

FBI fires agents for kneeling at George Floyd protests

WASHINGTON, 27 SEPT

The FBI has dismissed agents photographed kneeling in solidarity during a racial justice protest in Washington following George Floyd's death in May 2020, sources familiar with the situation reported. Initially reassigned last spring, approximately 20 agents have now been terminated. An FBI spokesman declined to comment on the matter. These dismissals occur amid a larger personnel reshuffle led by Director Kash Patel, with recent reports of declining morale following the firing of five agents and executives last month. A lawsuit from some dismissed supervisors claims Patel acknowledged that firing agents based on their investigations could be "likely illegal," yet felt powerless against White House and Justice Department pressures. *—PTI*

Oli makes 1st public appearance after being ousted

BHAKTAPUR, 27 SEPT

Former prime minister of Nepal and Chairman of the CPN-UML, KP Sharma Oli, re-emerged in public on Saturday for the first time since resigning on 9 September due to the widespread Gen Z protests. His appearance at an event organised by Rastriya Yuwa Sangh in Bhaktapur aims to reconnect with the youth, many of whom criticised his leadership. The protests, ignited by demands for political accountability, resulted in at least 74 deaths after violent clashes with police. Following the unrest, Oli's administration faced severe backlash, leading to his resignation and the appointment of former chief justice Sushila Karki as the nation's interim Prime Minister. *—ANI*

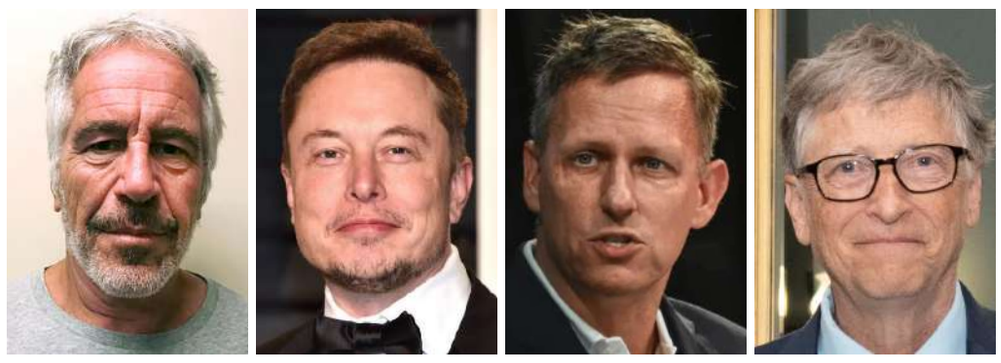
Pact with Saudi formalised our relations: Pak

ISLAMABAD, 27 SEPT

Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said that the recently signed strategic mutual defence pact with Saudi Arabia has "formalised" a relationship between the two countries that was previously "a bit transactional". Pakistan and Saudi Arabia last week signed the 'Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement' in Riyadh, pledging that any attack on either country would be treated as an "act of aggression against both." "It is not a reaction to what happened in Qatar because this was being negotiated for quite some time. Perhaps it must have sped it up a bit," Asif said in response to a question by journalist Mehdi Hasan during an interview with Zeteo, Dawn newspaper reported. Hasan probed whether Saudi could "buy (nuclear) bombs" from Pakistan, but Asif evaded the question. *—PTI*

Elon, Gates, Thiel named in new Epstein documents

New files claim that Musk planned to visit Epstein's island



Jeffery Epstein; Tesla CEO Elon Musk; Palantir Chief Peter Thiel; Microsoft Co-founder Bill Gates PHOTO: X

WASHINGTON, 27 SEPT

Newly released documents from Jeffrey Epstein's estate suggest that the convicted sex offender maintained contact with influential political and business figures, including tech tycoons Elon Musk, Peter Thiel, Bill Gates and media giant Steve Bannon.

The new batch of a six-page document, which were turned over to the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee and partially released by its Democratic members, shows an itinerary noting a tentative trip by the Tesla CEO on 6 December, 2014, to Epstein's island, where many women said Epstein abused them.

A note on the schedule - next to Musk's name - said, "Is this still happening?" It was unclear from the documents whether Musk made the trip.

The records included daily schedules, flight logs, financial ledgers, and phone message records spanning nearly three decades. In total, 8,544 documents were provided in the latest batch.

Other records listed a planned lunch with Thiel in late 2017, and a breakfast with former Trump strategist Bannon in February 2019 — just months before Epstein was arrested on federal sex trafficking charges. The documents also mentioned a tentative breakfast with Gates on 5 December, 2014.

"It should be clear to every American that Jeffrey Epstein was friends with some of the most powerful and wealthiest men in the world," Oversight Committee spokesperson Sara Guerrero said in the statement.

The documents do not accuse Musk, Thiel or Gates of any wrongdoings.

A statement accompanying the release said the daily schedules "include mentions of possible contact between Jeffrey Epstein and prominent figures like Musk, Thiel, Bannon, and Prince Andrew".

Musk, who had earlier attacked President Donald Trump about the 'Epstein File' and demanded a full release of the documents during their public fight, denied any wrongdoings. "This is false," he wrote on X. *—Agencies*

Trump orders release of govt records on Amelia Earhart

Trump announced that he has ordered the declassification and public release of all government records about aviator Amelia Earhart, who vanished in 1937 during an attempt to fly around the world. Trump said that it's an "interesting story" that has "captivated millions". "She was an Aviation Pioneer, the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean, and achieved many other Aviation firsts,'" he wrote on his Truth Social. "I am ordering my Administration to declassify and release all Government Records related to Amelia Earhart."

SC keeps in place Trump's foreign aid freeze

The Supreme Court has extended an order that allows President Donald Trump's administration to keep frozen nearly USD 5 billion in foreign aid, handing him another victory in a dispute over Presidential power. With the three liberal justices in dissent, the court's conservative majority on Friday granted the Republican administration's emergency appeal in a case involving billions of dollars in congressionally approved aid.

UNSC rejects effort to delay sanctions on Iran

UNITED NATIONS/ DUBAI, 27 SEPT

- The move is expected to heighten already magnified tensions between Iran and the West, as Tehran recalled its ambassadors to France, Germany and the United Kingdom

The UN Security Council has rejected another last-ditch effort to delay the reimposition of sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program a day before the deadline and after Western countries claimed that weeks of meetings failed to result in a "concrete" agreement.

The resolution put forth by Russia and China — Iran's most powerful and closest allies on the 15-member council — failed to garner support on Friday from the nine countries required to halt the series of UN sanctions from taking effect Saturday, as outlined in Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

"We had hoped that European colleagues and the US would think twice, and they would opt for the path of diplomacy and dialogue instead of their clumsy blackmail, which merely results in escalation of the situation in the region," Dmitry Polyanskiy, the deputy Russian ambassador to the UN, said during the meeting.

Barring an eleventh-hour deal, the reinstatement of sanctions — triggered by Britain, France and Germany, known as the E3 — will once again freeze Iranian assets abroad, halt arms deals with Tehran and penalise any development of Iran's ballistic missile programme, among other measures. That will further squeeze the country's reeling economy.

The move is expected to heighten already magnified tensions between Iran and the West, as Tehran recalled its ambassadors to France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

The sanctions are due to resume at 0000 GMT Sunday. *—PTI*

US revokes Colombian Prez' visa over backing Gaza

NEW YORK, 27 SEPT

The US Department of State announced on Friday it will revoke the visa of Colombian President Gustavo Petro following his allegedly inflammatory remarks at a demonstration in New York, where he urged American soldiers to disobey orders over Palestine.

Petro, who expressed solidarity with the Palestinian cause while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the UN General Assembly, urged American soldiers to disobey orders, stating, "From New York, I ask all the soldiers of the US army not to put your hands against the people. Disobey Trump's order, obey the order of humanity."

The State Department condemned his actions, describing them as "reckless and incendiary."

In response, Colombia's Interior Minister Armando Beneditti defended Petro, claiming, "They took away @petrogustavo's visa because he was one of the few Presidents who dared to denounce the genocide against Palestine at the UN." *—ANI*

WH official reportedly attacked in UN bathroom

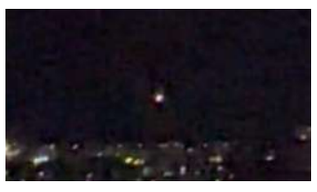
An official of the Trump administration was reportedly assaulted in a bathroom during the UNGA on Thursday afternoon. "An HHS official was followed into a bathroom, recorded, physically assaulted and verbally accosted by a deranged leftist at the UN who somehow entered the venue past multiple layers of security," Fox News quoted White House Deputy Press Secretary Anna Kelly as saying.

At UNGA, Yunus calls for revival of SAARC bloc

Bangladesh interim government Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus on Friday called for the revival of the SAARC grouping in the UNGA. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation regional grouping comprises India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Its biennial summits have not taken place since the last one in Kathmandu in 2014.

More drones sighted over Danish military airbase

COPENHAGEN, 27 SEPT



Drones have been sighted over several Danish airports PHOTO: X

The Danish defence ministry said Saturday that "drones have been observed at several of Danish defence facilities" overnight Friday into Saturday. The renewed drone sightings come after there were several drone sightings in the Nordic country earlier this week, with some of them temporarily shutting down Danish airports.

The Danish defence ministry did not say where exactly the drones were seen, but several local media reported that one or more were seen near or above the military Karup Air Base.

Danish public broadcaster DR reported that there were drones in the air both inside and outside the fence of the air base at around 8 pm, quoting Simon Skelkjær, the duty manager at the Central and West Jutland Police.

DR said that for a period of time the airspace was closed to civil air traffic, but that did not have much practical significance as there is currently no civil aviation in Karup.

The repeated unexplained drone activity, including over four Danish airports overnight Wednesday into Thursday and a similar incident at Copenhagen Airport, has raised concerns about security in northern Europe amid suspected growing Russian aggression.

The Copenhagen drones grounded flights in the Danish capital for hours on Monday night. *—PTI*

Israeli army flares drift over buildings destroyed during Israeli ground and air operations in the northern Gaza Strip, as seen from southern Israel PHOTO: PTI

Israel kills at least 38 people in Gaza

DEIR AL-BALAH, 27 SEPT

- The attacks came hours after PM Netanyahu told the UN General Assembly on Friday that his nation "must finish the job" against Hamas in Gaza.

Israeli strikes killed at least 38 people across Gaza overnight, health officials said, as international pressure grows for a ceasefire but Israel's leader remains defiant about continuing the war.

Strikes in central and northern Gaza killed people in their homes in the early hours of Saturday morning, including nine from the same family in a house in the Nuseirat refugee camp, according to health staff at the Al-Awda hospital.

The attacks came hours after a defiant Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told fellow world leaders at the UN General Assembly on Friday that his nation "must finish the job" against Hamas in Gaza.

Netanyahu's words, aimed as much at his increasingly divided domestic audience as the global one, began after dozens of delegates from multiple nations walked out of the UN General Assembly hall en masse Friday morning as he began speaking.

International pressure on Israel to end the war is increasing, as is Israel's isolation, with a growing list of countries deciding recently to recognise Palestinian statehood — something Israel rejects.

Trump and Netanyahu are scheduled to meet on Monday, and Trump said on social media Friday that "very inspiring and productive discussions" and "intense negotiations" about Gaza are ongoing with countries in the region. *—PTI*

World leaders walked out of the UN General Assembly ahead of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech PHOTO: X

PALESTINE APPLIES FOR BRICS MEMBERSHIP, SAYS ENVOY

BEIJING, 27 SEPT

Palestine has applied for membership of the BRICS as more countries recognised it as a state in recent weeks, a Palestinian diplomat said on Friday.

However, it is yet to receive a response, Palestinian Ambassador to Russia Abdel Hafiz Nofal told Russian media outlets.

"We have submitted an application, but, as you know, Palestine has certain conditions. I believe Palestine will participate in the association as a guest until the conditions allow it to become a full member. We haven't received a response yet," Nofal said.

BRICS, originally comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, expanded in 2024 to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates, with Indonesia joining in 2025.

Commenting on the Palestinian envoy's remarks, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun told a media briefing here that China welcomes more "like-minded partners" to join BRICS cooperation.

BRICS is an important platform for cooperation among emerging markets and developing countries and a source of strong impetus for multi-polarity and greater democracy in international relations, Guo said.

"The platform is widely recognised by Global South countries. We welcome more like-minded partners to join BRICS cooperation and jointly work for a more just and equitable international order," he said. *—PTI*

AMID HEIGHTENED TENSIONS

Want Don to be peacemaker with North: S Korea

UNITED NATIONS, 27 SEPT

South Korean President Lee Jae-myung and US President Donald Trump PHOTO: PTI

South Korea's President has asked President Donald Trump to become "a peacemaker" and use his leadership to get North Korea to talks to reduce military tensions on the Korean Peninsula, the South's top diplomat said Friday.

Trump "welcomed" the request from President Lee Jae-myung "and he expressed his willingness to be engaged with North Korea again," Foreign Minister Cho Hyun said. There was no immediate word from the White House.

Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met three times as North Korea was building a nuclear weapons stockpile, which Kim views as key to the country's security and his continued rule of the northeast Asian country.

"It would be fantastic if they met with each other in the near future," Cho said. "And President Lee Jae-myung made it clear to Trump that he will not be sitting in the driver's seat. He asked Trump to become a peacemaker, and he relegated himself to become a pacemaker," the foreign minister said. "We don't mind. On the contrary, we want Trump (to) exercise his leadership to pull North Korea to dialogue table."

Early Friday, South Korea's military said it fired warning shots to drive away a North Korean merchant ship that briefly crossed the disputed western sea boundary between the two countries, amid continuing high tensions.

Trump is expected to visit South Korea next month to attend the Asia-PacificEconomic Cooperation summit, which has prompted media speculation that he might meet Kim again at the border. Trump is likely to meet with Chinese leader Xi Jinping at the summit. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

NTPC pays ₹8,096 cr final dividend for FY25

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

State-owned NTPC, India's largest electricity producer, has paid a final dividend of Rs 3,248 crore to the Ministry of Power for the financial year 2024-25. The company's Chairman and Managing Director, Gurdeep Singh, presented the dividend payment advice to Power Minister Manohar Lal on 25 September in the presence of senior officials. The latest payout comes in addition to interim dividends of Rs 2,424 crore each, distributed in November 2024 and February 2025. With this, the total dividend declared for FY25 rises to Rs 8,096 crore, equivalent to Rs 8.35 per share of Rs 10 face value. NTPC, which operates nearly 84,000 MW of installed power capacity, has now maintained its dividend track record for 32 consecutive years. *—PTI*

Mumbai airport records 5M int'l passengers in FY25

MUMBAI, 27 SEPT

Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) recorded over 5 million international passenger arrivals between January and August this year, according to operator Mumbai International Airport Ltd (MIAL). This marks an increase from 4.8 million in the same period last year. International arrivals at CSMIA have grown at a compound annual growth rate of 21 per cent over the past three years, reinforcing the city's prominence on the global travel map, highlighted on World Tourism Day. The UAE was the largest source market with 1.5 million arrivals, followed by England (0.38 million) and Thailand (0.32 million). With direct connections to 55 destinations, CSMIA has strengthened its status as one of the region's leading aviation hubs. *—PTI*

GeM, AJNIFM sign MoU to boost public procuring

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

The Government e Marketplace (GeM) and the Arun Jaitley National Institute of Financial Management (AJNIFM) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Delhi to strengthen India's public procurement system. The partnership will combine GeM's digital platform with AJNIFM's expertise in training and research, focusing on enhancing officials' skills, developing knowledge systems, and encouraging innovation. The MoU includes structured training modules, research studies, digital resources, and joint events, with emphasis on areas such as green procurement, sustainable supply chains, and the use of emerging technologies. *—PTI*

KICL, Italian varsity partner for fashion training hub in TN

CHENNAI, 27 SEPT

Diversified conglomerate Kothari Industrial Corporation Ltd (KICL) on Saturday said it signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Italy-based Accademia IUAD (Institute of Universal Art and Design) to establish a joint venture training centre in Tamil Nadu. IUAD, a reputed design university in Italy, will collaborate with KICL to set up a training centre of international standards, the company said in a statement. The proposed centre will initially focus on the footwear and fashion accessories sectors, with the potential to expand to other departments of Accademia IUAD. This may include specialised training and education in design, fashion and related disciplines, KICL said in a Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) filing. *—PTI*

US tariffs a major risk to India's growth: Crisil

The report says tariffs will impact good exports & investments

KOLKATA, 27 SEPT

High tariffs imposed by the United States on Indian goods pose a major risk to the country's growth, Crisil Intelligence said in its September report.

The tariffs will impact both Indian goods exports and investments, the report added.

However, domestic consumption, driven by benign inflation and rate cuts, is expected to support growth, it said.

The country's GDP rose to a five-quarter high of 7.8 per cent in the first quarter of fiscal 2025-26, up from 7.4 per cent in the similar quarter in the previous year.

Nominal GDP growth, however, slowed to 8.8 per cent from 10.8 per cent during the same period, it added.

Domestic consumption, driven by benign inflation and rate cuts, is expected to support growth, the report said PHOTO: FREEPIK

The report said consumer price index (CPI) inflation is likely to soften to 3.5 per cent in the current fiscal from 4.6 per cent in the previous year.

Healthy agricultural growth is expected to keep food inflation under check, though the impact of excess rain was yet to be fully assessed.

Lower crude prices and benign global commodity prices are expected to contain non-food inflation, the report added.

On the monetary policy, the report said the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to implement one more rate cut this fiscal, followed by a pause.

The central bank's monetary policy committee had cut the repo rate by 100 basis points between February and June 2025 and is now awaiting the full transmission of past cuts. *—PTI*

ONGC began drilling an ultra-deepwater well in March, but has yet to reveal results PHOTO: FREEPIK

India finds gas and oil reserves in Andamans

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

Oil India Ltd has announced a discovery of natural gas reserves off the Andaman Islands, following the drilling of the Vijayapuram-2 exploratory well in the Offshore Andaman Block AN-OSHP-2018/1, which was acquired under the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP).

The firm reported "occurrence of natural gas" but has not disclosed an estimate of the reserve size. The preliminary analysis of gas samples collected during initial production testing confirmed the presence of natural gas, with further gas isotope studies being conducted to understand its genesis.

Oil India and Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) have been exploring for hydrocarbons in the Andaman Sea, aiming to reduce India's significant dependence on oil imports, currently at 88 per cent, and a 50 per cent reliance on foreign gas supplies.

ONGC began drilling an ultra-deepwater well in March, but has yet to reveal results. It said, "this could be a leading indicator of the presence of source or migration pathway or accumulation of hydrocarbons, which will help in future exploration and drilling strategy."

Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri noted that the discovery occurred 9.20 nautical miles (17km) from the shoreline at a water depth of 295 metres and target depth of 2,650 metres. "The gas samples... were tested and found to be 87 per cent methane," he said, adding that this find marks a significant step in confirming the Andaman basin's potential for hydrocarbons. *—PTI*

Tata Capital to launch IPO on 6 Oct

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

Tata Capital, the non-banking financial arm of the Tata Group, will launch its initial public offering (IPO) on 6 October, aiming to raise around USD 2B (£1.6bn), in what could become the largest listing in India's financial sector. The offer will close on 8 October, with anchor investor bids opening on 3 October.

The IPO, valuing the company at roughly USD 18B, comprises a fresh issue of 210M shares and an offer for sale of 265.8M shares. Under the sale component, Tata Sons will divest 230M shares while the International Finance Corporation (IFC) will sell 35.8M. Tata Sons currently holds 88.6 per cent of Tata Capital, with IFC owning 1.8 per cent.

Proceeds from the fresh issue will be used to bolster the firm's Tier-1 capital base, supporting future growth and lending.

Tata Capital was classified by the Reserve Bank of India as an "upper-layer" NBFC in September 2022, requiring it to list within three years. The IPO follows the strong market debuts of peers, including HDB Financial Services and Bajaj Housing Finance.

For the year ending March 2025, Tata Capital reported profit after tax of Rs 3,655 crore, up from Rs 3,327 crore in FY24, with revenue surging to Rs 28,313 crore from Rs 18,175 crore.

Since launching operations in 2007, the firm has served over seven million customers and offers more than 25 lending products alongside wealth management and insurance distribution. The issue is being managed by a consortium of leading domestic and global banks. *—PTI*

Dubai watchdog bars HDFC Bank's client onboarding

MUMBAI, 27 SEPT

HDFC Bank, India's largest private sector lender, has been barred from taking on new customers at its Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) branch by the Dubai Financial Services Authority (DFSA). The regulator has also prohibited the bank from soliciting customers, although it may continue to serve its existing base of 1,489 clients, including joint accounts.

The DFSA's decision notice highlights alleged breaches involving financial services provided to customers not onboarded through the DIFC branch, as well as irregularities in the onboarding process at the branch itself. The restrictions will remain in force until the authority issues a written amendment or revocation.

In a stock exchange filing, HDFC Bank stressed that it has already begun implementing measures to comply with the DFSA's directives and pledged to work closely with the regulator to resolve its concerns promptly.

The bank added that it does not expect any material impact on its overall operations. *—PTI*

World Food India sees ₹1 lakh cr deals

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

The second day of World Food India 2025, underway at Bharat Mandapam, has cemented India's ambition to become the global food basket, with investment commitments crossing Rs 1 lakh crore in just two days.

The Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) confirmed that 21 companies signed MoUs worth over Rs 25,000 crore on Day 2, adding to the momentum created on the opening day.

More than 25 knowledge sessions were held across the two days, drawing participation from international regulators, policymakers, start-ups, and industry leaders.

PHOTO: AI

Special sessions were led by states including Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab, Jharkhand, and Bihar, as well as partner nations such as New Zealand, Vietnam, Japan, and Russia.

The Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of AYUSH, APEDA, and the World Bank also contributed thematic sessions.

MoFPI further organised 13 focused discussions across five key pillars: pet food, nutraceuticals, speciality foods, alcoholic beverages, and plant-based foods. *—ANI*

Public Sector Banks' assets return exceed by 1%: Report

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

Public Sector Banks (PSBs) in India are entering a renewed phase of profitability, with their return on assets (RoA) surpassing 1 per cent, driven by stronger balance sheets, improved asset quality, and steady credit growth, according to a recent report by Motilal Oswal.

The report highlights that the profitability of PSBs has reached an all-time high of Rs 1.5 lakh crore. Additionally, aggregate earnings for the banks under review are projected to grow at a 14 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR) from FY26 to FY28. "While NIM pressure may weigh on the near-term outlook, rising fee income, a gradual moderation in cost ratios, and healthy coverage levels (PCR ~79 per cent) will help to keep RoA stable at 1.0-1.1 per cent," the report stated.

PSBs have strengthened their deposit franchises, maintained conservative credit-deposit ratios, and continued to gain traction in the Retail, Agriculture, and MSME (RAM) segments. Notably, during FY25, PSBs recorded a loan growth of 12 per cent, outpacing private banks at 10 per cent.

The report emphasised that the recovery in RoA to 1 per cent is not merely a fleeting achievement but a significant milestone for PSBs. With improving margins anticipated in the latter half of FY26 and steady asset quality, sector is positioned for sustained returns in the future. *—ANI*

FM to inaugurate 4th Kautilya Economic Conclave

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will inaugurate the 4th Kautilya Economic Conclave (KEC 2025) on 3 October.

The three-day event, themed "Seeking Prosperity in Turbulent Times," will conclude on 5 October with reflections on India's foreign and economic policy by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

KEC 2025 will bring together 75 participants from over 30 countries to discuss Asia's rise, BRICS, financial stability, and new industrial policy directions. Highlights include Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia leading a session on emerging technologies, and a conversation between RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra and former Banque de France governor Jean-Claude Trichet on central banking challenges.

The conclave will culminate in a high-level plenary on global macroeconomic prudence, chaired by PK Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister. The forum aims to blend India's domestic priorities with global perspectives. *—PTI*

Amid US tariffs, India & Russia hold trade talks

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal met with Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Patrushev on Friday to explore ways to strengthen economic and trade relations between the two nations.

Goyal took to social media platform X, stating, "Had a fruitful discussion with the delegation led by Russia's Deputy Prime Minister, HE Dmitry Patrushev. We are committed to deepening the India-Russia partnership and exploring new avenues for collaboration in trade, services, and industrial cooperation." He emphasised the goal of unlocking greater opportunities for mutual growth.

As per government sources, their discussions included bolstering oversight agencies, enhancing cooperation in the fisheries sector, and facilitating the entry of Russian meat and dairy products into the Indian market. Patrushev also highlighted the urgency of accelerating the free trade agreement between India and the Eurasian Economic Union.

Patrushev held additional talks with Union Minister of Health Jagat Prakash Nadda and Minister of Agriculture Shivraj Singh Chauhan, focusing on strategic partnerships and increasing agricultural supplies. *—ANI*

Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Patrushev with Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal during a meeting PHOTO: PTI

BACKED 111 FIRMS

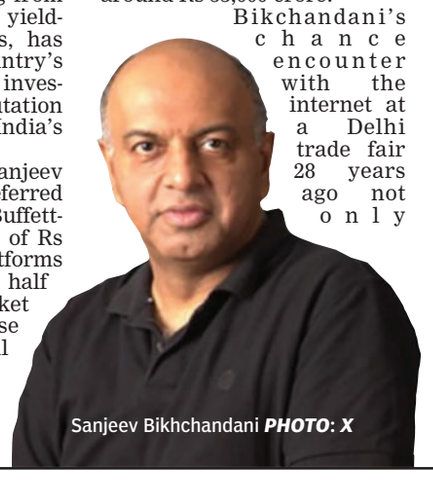
Naukri.com-parent named India's most successful venture investor

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

Naukri.com-parent Info Edge, whose long-term bets on Indian startups ranging from Zomato to Policybazaar yielded blockbuster returns, has been named the country's most successful venture investor, cementing its reputation as a standout player in India's startup ecosystem.

The firm, helmed by Sanjeev Bikhchandani - often referred to as India's Warren Buffett-invested a total capital of Rs 3,959.16 crore across platforms over the last one and a half decades. The fair market value (FMV) of these investments is several times that amount.

In a report, Economic Times puts Info Edge as the country's most successful venture investor. Its investments in Zomato and Policybazaar between 2011 and 2015 are currently worth around Rs 53,000 crore.



Sanjeev Bikhchandani PHOTO: X

Bikchandani's chance encounter with the internet at a Delhi trade fair 28 years ago not only sparked the creation of job portal Naukri.com but also marked the beginning of his journey as a serial investor.

Investment in Zomato (12.40 per cent in Eternal - the listed entity name of the food delivery firm) and Policybazaar (19.63 per cent) proved to be as providential as IPOs of both firms went on to become big winners.

In the process, they made Info Edge, the country's most successful venture investor and the biggest beneficiary of the startup listing.

In his annual letter to shareholders at the end of FY25, Info Edge founder and vice chairman Bikhchandani had recently stated that the firm, which has since started financial investing activity in 2007, achieved an estimated 36 per cent gross IRR across all vintages put together.

Info Edge was one of the early backers of homegrown listed companies, including Zomato and Policybazaar. It invested a total of Rs 483.78 crore and Rs 591.40 crore in the two companies, respectively. The value of its shareholding in Eternal (Zomato) is worth about Rs 38,350 crore, and that in Policybazaar is worth Rs 15,133 crore.

After these, Info Edge invested in many startups, including men's grooming brand Ustra, B2B ecommerce platform Shopkirana, edtech platform Adda247, omni-channel intercity bus travel platform Zingbus, travel tech platform ixigo, among others.

To date, it has backed 111 companies. *—PTI*

Rising domestic demand may push imports: Report

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

India's external sector is showing mixed signals, with rising domestic demand likely to boost non-oil and non-gold imports even as goods exports face increasing global tariff pressures, according to a report by ICICI Bank Global Markets.

The report noted that India's Current Account Deficit (CAD) for Q1FY26 remained contained at 0.2 per cent of GDP (USD 2.4 billion), supported by strong services exports and healthy remittance inflows.

However, the merchandise trade deficit widened to USD 68 billion from USD 64 billion in the same quarter last year, reflecting stronger imports and stagnating goods exports.

Export growth, particularly to the US, has slowed sharply, rising just 7 per cent year-on-year compared with 22 per cent previously, while exports to non-US markets recorded a marginal 6.6 per cent increase.

For FY26, the CAD is expected to remain benign, projected at 0.9 per cent to 1.2 per cent of GDP, though risks remain. The recent hike in US H1-B visa fees could affect services earnings and remittances. Foreign portfolio investment inflows continue to be weak compared with peers such as China and South Korea.

Overall, India's Balance of Payments is likely to post a deficit of USD 5 billion to USD 20 billion this financial year, largely dependent on global tariff developments. The report emphasises the need to carefully manage rising imports alongside sluggish exports to preserve external stability. *—ANI*

India eye win over Pak in high-stakes Asia Cup final

DUBAI, 27 SEPT

Winning will be the only thing on India's mind when they face arch-rivals Pakistan in the Asia Cup final in Dubai on Sunday, in a contest charged with political tension, fiery gestures, and cricketing drama.

The build-up has been intense. India's "no handshake" stance, Haris Rauf's taunts and aircraft-crash gesture, and ICC fines on both sides have fanned the flames. Even Pakistan's Interior Minister and PCB chief Mohsin Naqvi has stirred controversy with cryptic posts online.

Despite the distractions, India have been dominant, unbeaten in six matches, with only Sri Lanka taking them to a Super Over. Pakistan, by contrast, have stumbled into the final, but coach Mike Hesson rightly said: "The final is the only match that counts."

India's batting has revolved around Abhishek Sharma, whose 309 runs at a strike rate over 200 have led the charge. But cramps and the law of averages loom. "He's fine," said bowling coach Morne Morkel, also confirming Hardik Pandya will be assessed on Sunday morning after a hamstring scare.

The challenge is whether others, including an out-of-form Suryakumar Yadav, inconsistent Shubman Gill, and Tilak Varma, can step up if Abhishek fails early.

Pakistan's batting has been even shakier. Saim Ayub has had a nightmare tournament, and only Sahibzada Farhan showed brief resistance. Their hopes rest on early inroads from Shaheen Afridi and Haris Rauf. Without support, however, India's deep lineup may still prevail.

With Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravarthy exploiting spin-friendly conditions, India appear to have the edge, if emotions don't override execution.

For both sides, this isn't just about cricket. But for India, there's only one acceptable ending victory over Pakistan, ugly or not. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X/@CHINAOPEN

Iga advances to the third round at China Open

BEIJING, 27 SEPT

Wimbledon champion Iga Swiatek defeated Yuan Yue 6-0, 6-3 on Saturday to advance to the third round at the China Open and create some WTA Tour history. The WTA said Swiatek, with Saturday's win, became the first player to register 25 or more wins at WTA-1000 events for three consecutive seasons. Top-seeded Swiatek, who won last week's Korea Open in Seoul, has also won the French Open four times and the U.S. Open once among her six Grand Slam singles titles. In earlier matches Saturday in Beijing, fourth-seeded Mirra Andreeva beat another Chinese player, Zhu Lin, 6-2, 6-2, and American Emma Navarro defeated Elena-Gabriel Ruse 6-3, 7-6 (0). Naomi Osaka and Emma Raducanu were scheduled to play their second-round matches later Saturday. —*PTI*

Jr women's team goes down 0-5 against Australia

CANBERRA, 27 SEPT

The Indian junior women's hockey team slumped to its second straight defeat, going down 0-5 to hosts Australia U21 side in the second match of its ongoing tour here on Saturday. Makayla Jones (10', 11', 52') scored a hat-trick while Sami Love (38') and Migaliya Howell (50') also found the net for the hosts. India, who had suffered a narrow 2-3 loss in their opening match on Friday, were eager to bounce back, but Australia showed their attacking intent right from the start. The hosts struck twice in quick succession through Makayla to put India on the back foot early in the contest. In the second half, Australia continued to press high and capitalised on their opportunities.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Pranavi Urs enters top-20 in France Ladies Open

DEAUVILLE, 27 SEPT

Indian golfer Pranavi Urs showed she is getting back into form as she carded a 3-under 68 on the second day of the Lacoste Ladies Open de France to be tied 16th in the Ladies European Tour (LET) event here. Pranavi, with scores of 70 and 68, is four under par over two days with one more round left at the Golf Barriere de Deauville. Diksha Dagar too cut, shooting a second round of 2-under 69. She is placed T-44th with a one-under par score. Tvesa Malik (74-72) and Avani Prashanth (73-74) missed the cut, which fell at 1-over.—*PTI*

Yuvraj Sandhu only Indian to make the cut in Taiwan

TAIPEI CITY, 27 SEPT

Yuvraj Sandhu was the lone Indian to cut the Mercuries Taiwan Masters, carding a second-round 2-over 74 for a total of four over par. He is currently tied 36th. Scoring was high on the Asian Tour this week, with the cut set at five over par. Sandhu, who started on the front nine, made three bogeys and one birdie before improving on the back nine with two birdies and two bogeys to close the day at two over par. The other Indians who missed the cut this week were Viraj Madappa (82-69), Shiv Kapur (76-77), Rahil Gangjee (80-74), S.S.P. Chowrasia (79-75), Ajeetesh Sandhu (79-77), and Rashid Khan (77-82).—*PTI*

Shailesh Kumar wins India's first gold medal

Devi won her maiden World Archery Para C'ships gold

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

India opened its account at the World Para Athletics Championships in New Delhi on Saturday as Shailesh Kumar bagged gold while Varun Bhati clinched bronze in the men's high jump T63. Shailesh set a new Championship Record of 1.91m in the T42 category.

USA's Ezra Frech, the reigning Olympic champion, won the silver medal. Both Frech and Bhati finished with a best clearance of 1.85m, but on countback, the American beat the Indian to take second place on the podium. Sheetal Devi won her maiden World Archery Para Championships gold medal when she beat Turkiye's Oznur Cure Girdi in the Women's Compound Open final in Gwangju, Korea, on Saturday.

Sheetal took the lead in the second round of the gold medal match and went on to maintain the strong start through the game to clinch the final 146-143. The teenage Paralympic athlete took down the three-time World Championship gold medallist and the 2024 Paris Paralympics gold medallist. The individual final was a tense battle, but Sheetal stayed consistent and shot with composure. The first end was tied at 29-all, but Sheetal fired three 10s in the second end to take an early lead, winning it 30-27.

Shailesh Kumar PHOTO: PTI

Bought a ticket to see Neeraj in Paris: Roorda

Neeraj Chopra's fame is not limited to India, and Dutch javelin thrower Noelle Roorda, who won gold at the World Para Athletics Championships, said she even bought a ticket during the 2024 Paris Olympics just to watch him compete. Chopra, who created history with a gold at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, followed it up with a silver at the Paris Games."Yes, of course.

I know him," Roorda told PTI after winning the F46 women's javelin event, a classification for athletes with moderately affected movement in one or both arms or with limb absence."I went to Paris to the Olympic Games and bought tickets for the javelin night there. But that was the closest I ever saw him," said the 25-year-old, who throws with her left hand as her right arm extends only up to the elbow.

Roorda, however, admitted she had expected German thrower Johannes Vetter to win the Tokyo Olympic gold instead of Chopra."I thought Vetter would win gold. Then Chopra was on the podium, definitely, but Vetter was like outrageous good, and he was throwing like crazy that year. But he was too good too early (peaked early). —*PTI*

Sheetal Devi PHOTO: PTI

Roorda PHOTO: PTI

ASIA CUP 2025

Abishek won't hold back against Afridi in final: Morkel

DUBAI, 27 SEPT

Abhishek Sharma's flamboyance will meet its match in Shaheen Shah Afridi's precision in what promises to be an "edge of the seat" battle in the Asia Cup final on Sunday, according to India's bowling coach Morne Morkel, said on Saturday who has worked with both the talented youngsters.

Morkel had earlier worked briefly as a bowling consultant with the Pakistan team, where he got a chance to coach the left-arm speedster.

"Shaheen is obviously an aggressive bowler who will try to knock you over. And Abhishek is not going to hold back. I think so far, every time these two went head-to-head, we all as cricket supporters and fans are on the edge of our seats, and that's great for the game," Morkel said.

Both players are 25. However, while Shaheen has been around for some time now, the left-handed Abhishek has taken world cricket by storm with his dashing strokeplay in the ongoing Asia Cup. —*PTI*

Abhishek PHOTO: PTI

HEAD TO HEAD ASIA CUP

PLAYED:	15
INDIA WON:	12
PAKISTAN WON:	3

INDIA vs PAKISTAN MATCH STARTS AT **8.00 PM IST**

Shaheen Shah Afridi PHOTO: PTI

West Ham sacks head coach Graham

LONDON, 27 SEPT

Premier League club West Ham United on Saturday sacked head coach Graham Potter after a string of underwhelming results.

"Results and performances over the course of the second half of last season and the start of the 2025/26 season have not matched expectations, and the Board of Directors believes that a change is necessary to help improve the team's position in the Premier League as soon as possible," the club's statement read. The club also confirmed the exits of assistant coach Bruno Saltor, first team coaches Billy Reid and Narcis Pelach, lead goalkeeper coach Casper Ankergren, and goalkeeper coach Linus Kandolin with immediate effect. —*PTI*

Carlos Alcaraz praises physio for ankle treatment

TOKYO, 27 SEPT

Carlos Alcaraz advanced to the quarterfinals of the Japan Open with a 6-4, 6-3 victory over Zizou Bergs on Saturday and then paid tribute to his physiotherapist following an ankle injury scare.

The top-ranked Alcaraz landed awkwardly on his left ankle during his opening match on Thursday and was unsure how he would feel against Bergs.

He held up well, saying he "could play normally," and set up a last-eight meeting with Brandon Nakashima of the United States."It was tough, and it was a really important day and a half I had to recover as well as I could," Alcaraz said when asked about his ankle. "I have said it before and I will say it again, I have the best physio in the world, who I trust 100%."The work he has done for the ankle has been great. I could play normally, which is great.

Sometimes I was worried about some movements, when I could feel the ankle, but in general I played some great tennis, a great match." —*PTI*

ALCARAZ PHOTO: X/@CO

ASIAN AQUATICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Indian swimmers will bag 3-4 medals: Head coach Ameen

AHMEDABAD, 27 SEPT

Two-time Olympians Sajan Prakash and Srihari Nataraj will spearhead India's challenge against the continent's creme de la creme at the 11th Asian Aquatics Championships, beginning here on Sunday.

A total of 40 swimmers, including 20 men and 20 women, will compete at the newly-built state-of-the-art Veer Savarkar Sports Complex in Naranpura here.

Optimistic about India's chances in the event, which is historically dominated by the Chinese swimmers, India head coach Nihar Ameen said, "We had very good preparations with the entire contingent training together here at the Veer Savarkar Sports Complex. It is a fantastic facility and it's a very fast pool, so I am quite confident our swimmers will do well here."

The Indian contingent has been based in Naranpura over the past month for the national coaching camp.

Over 1,100 swimmers, coaches, and technical officials have arrived from 29 countries for the marquee event in the Asian Aquatics calendar, which will serve as a qualifying event for the Asian Games to be held in Nagoya, Japan, next year.

"We should win at least 3-4 medals. If Sajan swims as fast as he did in the 200m butterfly in the Senior Nationals, he is sure to win a medal, and the same goes with Srihari, who will be swimming 100m and 200m backstroke. Rohit also stands a chance to win a medal in 200m freestyle," Amin said. —*PTI*

ISSF Jr WC: Rashmika-Kapil pair wins air pistol mixed team gold

NEW DELHI, 27 SEPT

Indian shooters dominated the 10m air pistol mixed team event, clinching the top-two podium finishes while skeet exponent Raiza Dhillon pocketed a silver as the hosts continued to shine in the ISSF Junior World Cup at the Dr Karni Singh Ranges, here on Saturday.

India leads the tally with 11 medals, including three gold, five silver, and three bronze. Italy is second with two gold and a silver, while Individual Neutral Athletes (AIN) are third with two gold.

The pair of Rashmika Sahgal and Kapil, who recently won the men's and women's gold in the 10m air pistol junior event at the Asian Championships in Kazakhstan, joined forces to hog the limelight on day three by taking the top spot in the air pistol mixed team event. The duo defeated the other Indian pair, Vanshika Chaudhary and Antony Jonathan Gavin, 16-10 in the title round. The Spanish pair of Ines Ortega Castro and Lucas Sanchez defeated Iran's Parimah Amiri and Mohammadreza Ahmadi 16-14 to take the bronze.

It was a start-to-finish domination by Rashmika and Kapil, who topped the qualification round en route to the four-team final with an aggregate of 582.

Both shot 291 each as the Vanshika-Gavin pair was second entering the final, aggregating 578 (287+291). —*PTI*

Rashmika Sahgal and Kapil PHOTO: PTI

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

We have healthy mix of youth: Harmanpreet

DUBAI, 27 SEPT

India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur is confident that a mix of youth and experience across the departments will help them in their bid to win their maiden Women's World Cup beginning on Tuesday.

India is hosting the ICC showpiece event for the fourth time, with the team having come close to lifting the trophy on two previous occasions, the latest being in 2017 when the team, led by Mithali Raj, lost a thrilling final to England at Lord's.

The Indian has shaped up nicely for the event with maiden T20I and ODI away wins against England and a keenly-contested ODI series against defending champions Australia at home, which they lost 1-2.

"There is a healthy mix of youth and experience in our World Cup squad across all the departments. There is plenty of batting talent around the group with Smriti Mandhana, Jemimah Rodrigues, Harleen Deol, Pratika Rawal, Richa Ghosh, and Uma Chetry in the mix," said Harmanpreet in her column for ICC.

Mandhana was the standout batter for the hosts against Australia, striking back-to-back centuries, while her opening partner, Pratika Rawal, also shone with the bat.

The bowling department, especially spin, too, has performed commendably, though, against Australia, it conceded far too many runs in the deciding third ODI in Delhi recently.

"The bowling unit is equally impressive, with Renuka Thakur and Arundhati Reddy accompanying the young and promising Kranti Gaud, Sree Charani, and Radha Yadav. Add to this the three all-rounders in the form of Deepti Sharma, Sneh Rana, and Amanjot Kaur, who can turn the tide of the game in India's favour," said Harmanpreet. —*PTI*

Harmanpreet Kaur PHOTO: PTI

Last-gasp Murillo winner sends Marseille top of league

STRASBOURG, 27 SEPT

Marseille followed up its surprise win over Paris Saint-Germain with a 2-1 victory over Strasbourg in Ligue 1 thanks to Michael Amir Murillo's stoppage-time goal on Friday.

Marseille's upset of PSG on Monday came through a fifth-minute goal, but it needed two rebounds and stoppage time to win on Friday after Abdoul Ouattara gave Strasbourg the lead in the 49th. The goal was confirmed after a lengthy video review. The experienced Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang was first to the rebound off his own shot to level the score for Marseille in the 78th after goalkeeper Mike Penders spilled the initial shot.

Penders seemed to have done better in stoppage time when he tipped substitute Robinio Vaz's header onto the crossbar, but the rebound landed with Murillo to put Marseille ahead with a first-time shot.

Marseille goes to the top of Ligue 1 but is level on points with Strasbourg, which could have also ended the day in top spot, as well as with Monaco, PSG, and Lyon. —*PTI*

Michael Amir Murillo PHOTO: X/@MURILLO